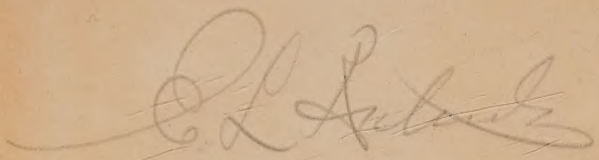
EMPTY POCKETS

RUPERT HUGHES



EMPTY POCKETS

[See p. 236

It was glorious to be felt sorry for by such a being as this.

Empty Pockets

By RUPERT HUGHES

Author of
"Excuse Me, Etc.

A. L. BURT COMPANY
PUBLISHERS - - NEW YORK
Published by Arrangement with Harper & Brothers

COPYRIGHT, 1914, 1915, BY HARPER & BROTHERS

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PUBLISHED MAY, 1915

K-P

ILLUSTRATIONS

It was Glorious to be Felt Sorry For by Such a Being as This . . . . . *Frontispiece*

Muriel Forgot Her Anger and Her Danger in a Swift Remorse for What She had Not Caused *Page* 56

She Talked to the Old Man as to a Child, Pleading, Promising Never to Bother Him Again, if He Would Yield Only This Once . . . " 120

Red Ida Knew Muriel Instantly from Her Number less Pictures in the Newspapers. She Whispered: "That's Muriel Schuyler. Her Old Man's Woith a Billion Dollars" . . . " 248

Worthing Had Only One Thought—Muriel's Safety . . . . . " 312

She Made No Resistance. Shang Simply Kept Saying, "Remember, Lady, Remember" . . . " 325

Muriel Had No Knowledge of the Intrigues Going on About Her . . . . . " 440

A Sudden Vicious Inspiration Led Pet to Flick the Ashes into Perry's Eye . . . . . " 472

Pet had Forgotten to Say "Thank You!" but it is Not Expected of Untamed Animals Given Their Liberty . . . . . " 568

Her Knees Weakened and She Sat Down on the Step and Put Out Her Arms . . . . . " 592

EMPTY POCKETS

CHAPTER I

THE exquisite Mr. Merithew, the amused and amusing millionaire, the ingenious contriver of quaint diversions, the walking fashion-plate, the jester who moved familiarly among the eminent, tweaked the ladies' ears, and plucked the ermine of the railroad presidents; whose doings were read about with adoration by the enormous snobbery that devours the news of the rich and outsnobs the snobs—this Mr. Merithew had seen nearly all of the best and worst of the world except the slums of New York. The slums of foreign cities he found picturesque, servile, full of beggars. He was not responsible for their slums. With his almost womanly intuition he felt that he would feel disturbed if he inspected the pauperdom of New York. He always said when he was invited to visit the lower East Side:

"No, thanks! It's the last place on earth where you'll ever find me."

And it was. He was found there, dead.

The smile that had won him the name of "Merry Perry" was fixed as plaster of Paris after it has set. The foppery that had been a national proverb was stained with the rust of tin; it was disheveled and crimson from his wounds.

There were people who pretended to be surprised that

EMPTY POCKETS

Merry Perry did not bleed blue. They would not take him seriously even then. He had been the joke of New York; and New York had been his.

"To him that hath!" While millions of honorable and industrious people were fighting for enough to eat and a corner to sleep in, three fortunes had been his inheritance. When he squandered one, another was provided. They had not sufficed him for his own whims. How could he have had any alms left for the poor? Especially as he did not like the poor. He had done nothing for them except to give them a little laughter at his magnificent flippancies, and to confirm them in one of the few luxurious vices of the poor, which is their open contempt for the wealthy, their belief that the rich have no right to their riches, and that all rich people are bad. The poor have almost always had more contempt for the rich than from them, for pity does not mollify their disdain.

Merry Perry had not approved of the poor any more than they of him. He had fled from them because he believed them to be dirty, disorderly, ugly, and dismal, and he hated dirt, he loathed disorder and ungrace; he abominated sorrow.

And now, as if Fate had grinned and spat upon him at last, his death-bed was the sun-blistered roof of a repulsive tenement in the most crowded square mile on the face of the earth.

A woman found him. A woman whose frowsy, graceless, unkempt, unclean appearance would have made him recoil from her, recoiled from him. Her ancestors, compelled by their German persecutors to select a new family name, had gracefully chosen "spray of roses"; but Mrs. Rosenzweig did not live down to her patronym. She looked more like a collection of balloons. It was amazing how fat she got on so little to eat. It was regrettable that she could not afford to buy what she could so ill afford to do without—corsets.

Her home was two crowded rooms high up in a dismal

tenement facing on Orchard Street near its crossing with Stanton.

It was a tall tenement, and the rickety stairs hardly supported her as she squeezed, panting, to their top and emerged, pushing a wash-basket far ahead of her. Her mouth was full of clothes-pins and her gaze was upward to avoid collision with the web of wash-lines. She saw that her own rope had been cut by some marauder. She started forward with a muffled grunt of anger.

It was then that she discovered Perry Merithew, fell over his legs, and sprawled on all-fours across the creaking basket. She must have looked like some uncouth animal as she turned to stare, then shuddered back on all-fours, emitting shrieks and clothes-pins.

Perry Merithew, Esquire, lay between her and the penthouse door. She howled for somebody to come and take him away; but it was the busiest hour of the market war in the street below, and most of the men were out selling what most of the women were out buying. Even up here, the racket occasioned by the gradual transfer of the contents of the push-carts into the black leather market-bags had the sound of a surf where sea-gulls scream and quarrel.

The roof, too, was inclosed by walls and no one heard or heeded Mrs. Rosenzweig and her burly terror. She had to work her way unaided around the gruesome Mr. Merithew. She kept her eyes on him as if he might jump at her. The grip of lifelong penury was evident in the automatic groping of her miserly hands for every last one of her clothes-pins before she dragged herself and her basket backward through the penthouse door.

Thence she stumbled down the stairs to her own room where two of her children were. The other children and the husband and the boarder who shared the two-room suite were absent. First, Mrs. Rosenzweig called for a "glass wasser" and mumbled it and choked before she could explain that she had seen the work of the Angel of

Death. She told her boy Hermann to "bring once a policer right away quick."

Hermann, who was born in America, and had imbibed liberty and impudence with his milk, told his mother, "Ah, go on!" But he ran up to the roof and gazed a long while at the interesting stranger. Then he ran downstairs and told his sister Lillie that there was "a swell stiff up-stairs."

Lillie called him a liar and ran up as he ran down.

When Officer Madigan plowed his way through the market riot and attained the roof he found a crowd already gathered in a staring circle like a pack of coyotes round a man sleeping by a fire. Nobody knew who he was. His fame had not extended into this realm. Madigan would have called the man a "plain drunk" but for the red and the white and the breathlessness.

Other policemen arrived, fighting their way up the jammed staircase. They were not long in deciding that it was a case of robbery ornamented with assassination. There were no identifying cards or letters, but a pocketbook was found empty; a watch-chain dangled watchless, and there were indications that a scarf-pin had been hastily removed from the scarf. There were no coins in the pockets. While the police were debating whether or not to touch the body before the coroner was summoned, two reporters appeared. The flies were there first, and now the reporters.

Mr. Merithew was in the hands of the public. His first epitaph would be head-lines.

Two reporters had chanced to be passing through the jumbled masses of Rivington Street in search of another "story" when they saw the crowds thickening like ants around the door of the Orchard Street passageway. Orchard Street ordinarily resembles a panic in a crowded theater, but the reporters bucked the meek throng and wedged through.

The taller of them was a handsome young fellow named

Raeburn—not long escaped from Harvard. The other was brindle in color, with half of one eyebrow missing; his college had been the streets of New York. His name was Hallard. At present he was drawing money from the *Gazette* and giving it the ruthless loyalty of a mercenary soldier. Raeburn was still young enough to suffer from horror and pity and things like that. Hallard was as sophisticated as an ambulance surgeon.

Hallard called the policeman by name. He knew nearly everybody by name. As soon as he had bent forward over the unknown and unknowing center of attraction he called him, too, by name:

"Merry Perry Merithew. Well, I'll be—"

He did not finish his prophecy, for he noted that Merithew's hands were clenched; from between all his knuckles protruded wisps of hair, a woman's hair, hair of the color they call burnt sienna.

CHAPTER II

HALLARD'S first emotion was the joy of a prospector hoping for a nugget and finding a bonanza. He realized instantly that he had stumbled on a story of front-page, right-hand-column dignity, with eight-column scare-heads. Perry Merithew had always been pay-dirt, but now at space rates he would weigh in every day for weeks, perhaps for months. With a stubborn murderer well-lawyered, a good long trial, and several appeals and reversals he might hold out for years. Hallard's only regret was that a man from another paper had stumbled on the same lode. But Raeburn was young and not quite news-broken, and was already feeling regret instead of rejoicing.

Raeburn was shaking his head. "Poor fellow! Think of his family. His mother's alive, maybe. And his wife— Has he a wife?"

"He has one official wife," Hallard answered, "but he was the busy little humming-bird of the village. There'll be some flutter in the rose-garden when this gets out—some flutter, believe Me!"

Raeburn was still elegiac. "But to think of his being killed!"

Hallard's amazement was: Ah, that's been comin' to him a long while. The funny thing is his being found in a place like this, dead or alive." The word "funny" had come to have a technical meaning in Hallard's lexicon. It was almost incredible to him that Perry Merithew should be here.

Abruptly he recalled the fact that he was first and fore-

most a newspaper man and it was his prime duty to give this news its début in the *Gazette*. He said to Raeburn:

"Funny that nobody saw this thing done. While I'm rummaging round here you might look over that ledge and see if any windows command the roof. He might have been shot from some other house."

"That's so," said Raeburn, and wormed his way through the crowd, while Hallard, glancing about among the stolid faces, selected the alert-eyed little Hermann Rosenzweig as the only available messenger. He scribbled on the margin of one of the newspapers he always carried the telephone number of the *Gazette* and the street number of the tenement. Then he printed in large letters:

> City Editor, Gazette.
>
> Merry Perry Merithew found here on roof murdered by unknown beauty with copper-colored tresses. Send every man you can spare, also artists. Big beat if you rush extra.
>
> Hallard.

He gave Hermann a quarter to take the note to the nearest drug-store on Forsythe Street and have Mr. Pytlik telephone the message. He promised Hermann another quarter if he returned with the answer.

Hermann flashed away like a carrier-pigeon released, and Hallard resumed his search.

He had called the unknown woman beautiful for three reasons: in the first place all women who get into the newspapers are beautiful; in the second place, Perry Merithew was addicted to beautiful women; in the third place, Hallard felt somehow the artistic necessity for having her beautiful. He felt rather proud of that word "copper-colored," too. He had chosen it hastily, for its sinister note. The color was safe, for copper abounds in colors of all sorts. But Hallard intended to make use of allusions to the copperhead, that silent, slimy horror that strikes without the alleged warning of the rattle-

snake, lurks under flowers and among autumn leaves and laurels, murders the innocent, and vanishes without noise or trace. Hallard felt almost grateful to the fair assassin for leaving him such inspiring documents.

He could visualize the struggle of the revengeful woman or the defensive girl stabbing or shooting the man. Hallard would shortly write the very words she had said, and describe them as overheard by neighbors. But first he must have at least a theory to work on. The police would not let him examine the body to see the nature of the wounds so abundantly advertised in red. He resolved to obtain a bit of that hair. He stooped quickly, laid hold of one of the strands, and gave it a little tug.

"He won't let go!" he said.

Officer Madigan grasped Hallard's collar and dragged him back, commanding him to "come along out of that." But Hallard brought away unbeknownst a few threads. They curled about his fingers till he could transfer them to his pocketbook unobserved.

"Whoever she was, she had red hair and—" Once more he eluded Madigan long enough to bend forward for another look. "And it wasn't pulled out. It was cut off!"

Hallard's action had attracted all eyes to the eight little auburn skeins protruding from the cold clench of those hands. Hallard glanced about among the crowd. Others imitated him. The women were all bareheaded or only partly coiffed with knitted shawls. They were all black-haired or brown, save one—a young woman of almost Turkish mien. Her hair was red. Every gaze fastened on her. She understood, gasped, flushed, started to escape. The press was too close.

Hallard put his hand on one of her arms. Madigan seized the other. She flinched away. Then with a sudden desperation she broke out into exclamations of some gibberish that nobody understood. But her deed was

eloquent: she whipped from her heavy locks a gaudy comb and a few pins and shook her hair out like a flame. Then she bent her head for the inspection of whoso wished. She ran her fingers about her blazing scalp and it was evident that no knife or scissors had ever worked mischief there.

Hallard with the franchise of his calling dared to make sure. He put his hand upon her head and she leaped back in scarlet shame, with a little cry of distress. He had snapped off three or four hairs!

The outraged woman appealed to the others volubly, but they seemed not to understand her any more than Hallard did. And, not understanding her, they laughed at her. Hallard had picked up a little of the Yiddish dialect in the course of his wanderings about the many worlds of New York. He addressed the girl, but she made no answer.

Mrs. Rosenzweig, who had returned now and assumed a sort of proprietorship over the mystery, explained to Hallard:

"Her? She dun't speak Yiddish. She's a Oriental yoost come ofer from Toorkey. Spaniolisch she speaks, could you talk it, *nu*."

Hallard had a little knowledge of many languages, and he made humble apologies in cigar-maker's Cuban. But the girl retreated from him still, though her wild eyes showed that she understood.

"Dem Oriental vomens is *sehr* shy," said Mrs. Rosenzweig. "She belongs by femmily name Abravaya."

A young man came eel-like through the crowd now. He was of fair hair and skin, rather Hibernian than Hebraic; at least he resembled those Irish who resemble the Spanish. To him the young girl ran for refuge. What she told him angered him and he glared at Hallard.

Hallard was used to being glared at. He began again in laborious Spanish. The young man answered in English.

"For why you pool my wife by the hair, huh? You theenk she is know thees man? No! She knows nawbody. She is my wife."

Hallard tried to explain. But he did not confess that he had purloined a lock of hair, and for no sentimental reasons. He was of the school of newspaperdom that has usurped the functions of the police and the detective bureaus and has solved some of the mysteries that have baffled the regular departments.

The police and the public are afraid of these reporters, for they go armed with the terrible weapons of publicity. They can make a patrolman famous or an inspector ridiculous. They advance a guess and call it a clue. In place of hiding what they know they advertise their theories as facts, and thus question all their readers. In a day they can reveal portraits and possibilities to millions of spectators, among whom sometimes some one is reminded of an incident that furnishes a bit of further information. And so they set upon the trail of the guilty a pack of countless sleuths.

Hallard, staring down at the reliques of Perry Merithew, wondered what extraordinary reason had brought this fashionable gentleman to this most impolite place. A woman had plainly been with him at the last moment. Apparently there had been a struggle. He had clutched her by the hair. She had killed him, cut herself free, and fled.

It was most probable that she belonged in this neighborhood. Otherwise why should he have come here? Surely, if she belonged up-town, she would never have selected this hideous trysting-place. Such a tragedy involving two paupers would be worth hardly a stickful of type; involving a man like Merithew, it meant columns upon columns, whether the missing woman were rich or poor. Hallard could hardly decide which he wanted her to be.

He had found nearly everything possible to human crime, and infinite variety in human folly. He had also

learned that wickedness usually does what charity is advised to do—it begins at home.

The most natural thing to suppose was that Merithew had come here on some insane excursion of his jaded fancy to meet the woman whose hair he held. The heat of the night must have driven them to the roof as it had driven hundreds of thousands of people from the ovens indoors.

Some quarrel had arisen; the woman had knifed Merithew, or shot him, or somehow executed him. In these times when tires are incessantly exploding, a sound like a pistol-shot attracts no attention at all. In this region even the cry of "Police!" usually fails to bring any one in haste, least of all a policeman. So the woman killed Merithew, and nobody, except possibly some accomplice, paid any heed. Hallard could imagine what supreme horror must have thrilled that woman as she sawed her hair free from the clutch of that indomitable tenacity, leaving these clues behind for those grim hands to proffer posthumously. Who was she? Whence come? Whither a fugitive?

If the hair had been black it would have been of small help in this region where brunettes moved about in throngs. But hair of a reddish persuasion was conspicuously rare here.

Hallard cast about for further data. He saw a few hair-pins and picked them up, but the policemen took them away from him, all but one, which he palmed.

It was his desire to beat the police to the solution—for the glory of his paper. His own ingenuity would remain anonymous. His work would be so impersonal that the highest flight of egotism would be an occasional allusion to himself as "a reporter of the *Gazette*."

Meanwhile Raeburn had returned without discoveries; he began to eavesdrop on the police and the detectives, who were coming up with speed and making examinations, casting about for finger-prints and foot-prints, taking

measurements and snapshots, and hunting with microscopes. Hallard was resolving to leave the scene to the other reporters and the press photographers. The *Gazette* squad was already on the way, according to Hermann, who returned with commercial promptitude.

Hallard decided to search the neighborhood. Failing there, he would ransack Merithew's own past.

The clamor of the gong of an ambulance came up from the street below faintly, like a passing bell. The surgeon, when he arrived, would tell how Merithew died, and how long ago. Meanwhile Hallard made a last hasty survey of the roof. It was so broken up with tanks and chimneys and the skylights that there was little free room. A wall built up around the ledge cut off the view of the surrounding roofs. Hallard found an old box lying against the wall near a chimney. He set it up and stood on it while he peered over.

The view was too familiar to excite his wonder. It was the enormous multiplication of poverty, a festival of squalor. Everywhere there were clothes-lines with their drooping pennants of defeat—they filled the fire-escapes. On the window-sills the bedclothes hung or pillows were heaped, or mattresses; or the denizens leaned out, gazing into the busy streets.

The very effort toward cleanliness was the emphasis of its absence. Poor people's underclothes! washed without pride by unpaid wives disgusted at their fabrics and hating their tasks—where could one find a less pleasant sight?

The buildings were new from the Old World ideal for slums, but they were forlorn enough for New York. Many of them had ornamental cornices, but they accentuated the pauperdom like second-hand finery. Here and there, as if a marble stele had been set up in a junk-heap, rose some great, beautiful school building or hospital.

From this eyrie one could see many roofs, but could be seen from few. There had probably been no witnesses to

the deed. But how had a man dressed as well as Merithew always was entered such a place without incurring notice? How had the guilty woman slipped away unheeded?

As Hallard slid his fingers along the top of the wall, they fell on something. Without looking at it or starting he closed his palm upon it. He did not intend to share his discoveries with the detectives. His hand studied its trove. Then, as if he were looking down into the street, he bent his head and examined what he had found. It was a hat-pin of unusual design, a gold claw gripping a large amethyst. Hallard pressed it into the lining of his coat and dropped down from the box, shaking his head with ostentatious disappointment.

A young surgeon appeared now and busied himself with the cadaver. He announced first that the death must have occurred many hours before. There was a cut on one palm. There was a wound in the top of the head that might have been made with a blunt-edged instrument, as a brick, the butt of a revolver, a blackjack, or the common gas-pipe of footpad commerce. There was no bullet or knife or needle wound upon the body. It was impossible to tell without more thorough examination. That must wait till permission was received to remove the body.

The identity of the vanished woman remained to be solved. The detectives hoped to gain some ground in her pursuit by the chemical and microscopical study of the structure of her hair. They were already in dispute as to its color. One said "red," one said "auburn," one said "golden." Hallard mentioned his own opinion and pointed out the value of "copper-haired." It was a good word, and thereafter the police and everybody else used it. The unknown was invariably referred to as "the copper-haired woman."

Meanwhile the police had herded the crowd from the roof. The flat-footed, thick-headed guardians of the peace were trying to look superhumanly intelligent as

they peered and pried. Hallard sneered at them and left them to their perplexities.

Hallard resolved to interview Mr. Abravaya. Perhaps his red-headed wife had a red-headed sister or some relative. He left the other reporters to watch the police.

What they might find or pretend to find would be turned into the general fund of newspaper information. Every newspaper had long held ready in type a brief "obituary" of Merithew and an envelope of clippings concerning his frivolities.

Taking care of the dead was for undertakers and newspaper cubs or journeymen. The things that Hallard wanted to know were the things that some living woman was terribly eager to keep secret.

CHAPTER III

AS Hallard went down the steps, already writing his story on the tablets of his memory, he pushed his way through an almost solid agglutination of people. He did not see the red-headed woman. She had disappeared with her husband.

He had forgotten her name. But he remembered her confusion, and her flight was worth looking into. She might have guilty knowledge, if not guilt itself. He encountered among the sheep-staring faces the shiny black eyes of little Hermann Rosenzweig, and Hermann escorted him to the door of the Abravayas and evinced a perfect willingness to accept another fee for his services.

Hallard paid him, and knocked at the door. The young man with the Hiberno-Hebraic features appeared. Hallard was not used to being invited in or kept out. He sauntered forward, and Mr. Abravaya had either to close the door in his face or be walked over. The former did not suit his courtesy nor the latter his pride. He stepped back and Hallard marched into a room that was cleaner than he had expected. There were a few little flowers growing bravely in tin cans.

The red-headed girl, who was nursing a tiny baby, fled to the kitchen. Mr. Abravaya drew forward a chair and bowed Hallard into it with gracious ceremony. Then he called through the door and sat down on the bed, waiting for his visitor to state his errand. Hallard knew better than to begin at once on the purpose of his quest.

"You speak English, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Abravaya, Behor Josef Abravaya, sir. Yes, I spik

Enngleesh pretty good. I am only seex mawnth in thees kantry, but I spik Enngleesh pretty good. I spik seven language. In Constantinople, where I am come from, a man must spik much language."

"You come from Constantinople?" said Hallard. "But they told me you were Spanish."

"Four—five hondred years ago my pipple are in Spain, but they are so pairsecute they go by Toorkey. They spik the Spanish—a kind of Spanish—Ladino we call him—or Spaniolisch. My pipple are happy in Toorkey. The Toork he is nicer to our pipple as the Chreestians, but not very nice, too. Then comes thees war with Greece and Boolgaria. All the men must be soldiers. I do not weesh to be soldier for the Sooltan who geeves us no leeberty. To fight for leeberty is all right—if I get myself killed, my brawther he get what I fight for. But to fight and get killed for nawthing is no good, huh? Let the Sooltan get killed by himself. In America is different. Here everything is free—nearly free. I should fight for America with the greatest of pleesure. So I come by New York, and many of our Ladino pipple. Ten—fourteen t'ousand of us is come in las' two years."

"That's very interesting," said Hallard without interest. "And does your wife speak English, too?"

"No—my wife spik only the Ladino. She onderstands not even the Yiddish. She knows hardly anybody here. We Oriental Jews are a separated pipple among our own pipple."

The red-headed woman entered now from the kitchen. She had quieted the baby somehow and she carried in its stead a little tray with two small cups of almost solid black coffee and a dish of pasties.

"My wife," was Mr. Abravaya's introduction. "Sarah, thees is Mr.—Mr.—"

"Hallard," said Hallard, rising and bowing.

Sarah hardly nodded and did not raise her eyes. She thrust the tray forward meekly.

Abravaya waved the coffee and *baklava* toward Hallard with a gesture of Arabian hospitality. He urged the sweets upon him. This room was his tent, even though it was pitched four flights in air. Hallard was his guest, though he had forced his way in. Hallard had a contempt for formalities, but he imitated them now as graciously as he could. He sipped the syrupy wet dust of the coffee and made a pretense of munching the *baklava*. He would have preferred a pretzel and a glass of beer.

He wanted to question the woman, but his Spanish was cumbersome, and after he had emptied his cup and declined another she retreated to a corner and sat with her heels caught up under her, in harem fashion.

So Hallard questioned Abravaya adroitly, commenting on the unfortunate discovery on the roof. It seemed wiser to him to pretend that he thought it an accident. He concealed the fact that he was a reporter. He apologized for the liberty he took with Mrs. Abravaya's hair and soon had her husband laughing at her extraordinary display of it on the roof. Sarah did not laugh. She had inherited something of the Turkish belief that while it is almost unpardonable for a woman to expose her face to a stranger, it is quite unpardonable to let her hair be seen. Only a suspicion of murder with intrigue had led her to violate that sanctity. It was not a matter of jest.

Hallard was soon convinced that she had no part in the affair. He asked if they had not heard some noise on the roof during the night. Had they not visited the roof themselves to escape from the heat?

Abravaya explained that the roof was too cut up to serve as a dormitory. It was doubly inclosed by its own walls and by the walls of the surrounding tenements. No one slept there of nights. He himself and his wife had spent the night on the fish-block of a small shop on Orchard Street.

Then, Hallard suggested, they ought to have noticed the arrival of Merithew. He was a man whose costume

excited attention on Fifth Avenue; how not on Orchard Street? Abravaya described the crowded state of the street at night. So many people came and went, there was such a stir of restless wretches shifting their places or their positions, that heavy eyes paid little heed to what shadowy figures slunk about.

An automobile would have attracted instant notice. No car or carriage had visited the street.

It occurred to Hallard that Merithew himself would probably have done what he could to avoid attention in this place. But how could he have found his way thither without asking questions? Perhaps, after all, the woman had brought him—had guided him, perhaps, on some made-up errand in order that she might rob him. But robbery might not have been the sole motive. Blackmail might have been the object—or revenge, a woman's revenge with a pretense of robbery to disguise the crime. This theory appealed to Hallard; it made good newspaper material. He was going to "sling himself" in a description of the emotions the woman of mystery felt when she felt the hideous closing of those fingers on her hair.

Always he came back to that hair. And now he felt enough at home to ask if his host knew any neighbor whose tresses were of that hue. Abravaya was sure that his wife was the only possessor of such a treasure. He spoke to her. He translated her answer:

"Sarah, my wife, says she did seen no hair like those since Maryla Sokalska is move away."

"Maryla Sokalska?" Hallard answered, inscribing the name on his memory. "When did she move? Where? Why?"

Abravaya translated his English into Ladino, and Sarah's answer into English:

"Sarah, my wife, says it is not of her business. She saw her go. She cried. Mees Sokalska her father is Meesteh Sokalski he live in thees buildink."

Hallard talked of other things, then made his exit with an effort at ceremonial.

The narrow, dark and dingy halls were still packed. Little Hermann was not far away. He took pride and profit from leading Hallard down a flight of stairs to the door of the Sokalskis.

Hallard knocked, and a venerable man with the beard of a prophet and the eyes of a Lear opened the door. He bowed when Hallard named him. Inside the room there were sewing-machines whirring. Hallard asked:

"Does Miss Maryla Sokalska live here?"

The old man's questioning eyes filled with a tragic fire like Ezekiel's. His lean hand went into his beard. He shook his head. The sewing-machines stopped as if they, too, were listening.

"Can you tell me where she lives?" Hallard went on.

The ancient closed his eyes and answered, huskily:

"Ve know her not. To us—she is—dett. Ve have made a mournink for seven days in our ho'se. See, I have rendet my garmends." He pointed to the lapels of his coat. They were slashed. "She is livink no longair."

Hallard had heard that some of the orthodox Jews, in the rare instances where their daughters brought disgrace upon the home, turned them forth into the wilderness like scapegoats, and counted them as buried.

Another man might have lifted his hat and turned away in respect of such misery, but Hallard's business was the publication of the things that break the hearts and the prides of families. He spoke with much deference:

"Do you happen to know if—if your daughter knew a Mr. Merithew?"

The name seemed to have the effect of a poison in the old man's ears. His grief turned to Mosaic hatred. He gnashed his teeth. His beard wagged with fury. He made haste to close the door.

Hallard tapped; it was not opened. He tried the

knob; it was locked. He called through; there was no answer.

Hallard used to say, "The only thing that gives me the nerve to ask people some of the questions I do is the fact that they haven't got self-respect enough to kick me out."

Hallard did not blush at the rebuff he had had. He rather respected the old man for his insult. But he did not relinquish his interest in the affair. His eyes were kindled with encouragement. In the tenement where Perry Merithew was found he had discovered a family to whom the name of Perry Merithew was an abomination. That was both news and clues in good measure.

His next step must be the finding of Maryla Sokalska. He was sure that he was a lap or two ahead of the detectives or the other reporters. So many roads to take, so many things to do, occurred to his brain, that he wished he were a hundred men instead of hardly more than one.

Before he took up his new path he hurried over to the Bowery. At a corner news-stand the dealer was just opening the bundles of the latest extras. Hallard bought them all. None of them had a word of Merithew. Up the wide avenue came a low, rakish motor-truck at furious speed. It was a *Gazette* delivery-car. The men, knee-deep in bundles, threw one off to the dealer.

Hallard cut the string himself, and slapped the paper open. Across the top of the front page in letters two inches tall and as red as gore was the legend:

MERITHEW MURDERED

In black letters only an inch tall and dwindling line by line, he read:

COPPER-HAIRED BEAUTY
SLAYS SOCIETY'S PET
BODY OF "MERRY PERRY" MERITHEW
MULTIMILLIONAIRE FOUND
ON SLUM ROOF

The *Gazette's* resourceful city editor, Mr. Ulery, had turned up the matrix of a large portrait of Merry Perry in a costume he had worn at a famous fête. Perry had appeared as a Sultan, to the delight and assistance of the wits. Mr. Ulery had ordered the material of the obituary department into linotype while the block letters of the head-lines were being set up. To make room for the sensation he had thrown out bodily three or four items of world-wide importance. Altogether the *Gazette's* special extra treated Merithew handsomely.

Hallard looked at the extras of the other papers. Not one of them mentioned Merithew. They were full of the same old European war rumors. Hallard had scored a great beat. It was pleasant to work for a city editor like Ulery who could respond to the spur like that. It was a great joke on the other papers. They would have to steal their news from the *Gazette* this time. To-morrow the *Gazette* would crow over them and reproduce photographs of their Merithewless head-lines.

Hallard hurried to a drug-store to dictate from the telephone-booth a masterpiece of information. Since Ulery had done so well and so promptly by the first scant message, what would he not do when he learned of the hair and the Sokalska who had sinned to banishment and been mourned as dead? Hallard suggested to Ulery a number of more prominent names that might be linked with Merithew's and advised the release of further news-beagles in all directions.

He and the city editor exchanged exclamations of rapture over the nice bluggy nature of the event. They were artists in their way and they were beginning a great fresco.

If a citizen of the Dark Ages could be wakened from his centuries of sleep he would marvel somewhat at our tall buildings—though they had pretty tall buildings then—but he would wonder more at our enormous improvement in the machinery of gossip.

If he had seen the brindled Hallard steal into a little closet like a confessional, and by whispering into a small rubber cup summon the tormenting imps of publicity to their tasks and set free the roaring dragons of the presses, the revenant would have marveled indeed. But he would have sworn that he saw horns on Hallard's forehead; he would have sniffed brimstone, and he would have crossed himself.

CHAPTER IV

TO find Maryla Sokalska was Hallard's next chore. He was about to plunge back into the region where she had lived, but it occurred to him that since her father's home had been closed against her she would hardly have lingered in that neighborhood.

Hallard could not imagine why she should have brought Merithew down there, even to rob him. But motives were not his affair: they were important to God and the juries, not to the reporter. His traffic was in deeds.

Hallard reasoned that the best place to begin backtracking Miss Sokalska was from the latest trail of Mr. Merithew.

Perhaps the news of his death had not yet broken like a thunderbolt across his home. The *Gazette* wagons, with their freight of sensation, would hardly yet have reached so far north as the granite residence on Central Park East, where the "Seeing New York" lecturers always megaphoned their pop-eyed flocks:

"On your right—the handsome residence of Mr. Parry Marithoo, the famous *bone vivong*."

Some one down-town buying the *Gazette* and learning the truth might have telephoned to Mrs. Merithew—but perhaps not yet. Some one certainly would at any moment. Hallard looked for the name in the telephone-book. It was not given there. He remembered that it was a private wire and not listed. Once before he had noted it in his memorandum-book. He found it there and dropped another nickel in the slot. When the con-

nection was made he asked for Mr. Merithew. A man's voice answered:

"He's not a tome, sir."

There was a butleresque intonation in the answer and no indication of tragedy.

Hallard asked for Mrs. Merithew, and managed to elicit a hint that she was probably at a committee meeting in the Charities Building.

Hallard said: "Well, can't you tell me where I'll find Perry—er, Mr. Merithew? It's awfully important."

The apparent slip into the first name was as effective with the butler as a letter of introduction. He answered: "Sorry, sir, I can't say. But if you please to keep the line a moment I'll put you through to his man."

The clutter of the telephone evoked another voice, to which the butler's voice said: "A friend of the master's is inquiring where he could be found. It's important."

Then the valet's voice, full of hand-rubbing obsequiousness:

"I've had no word from him since yesterday, seh. He is not supposed to be in town during the hot weather, you know. I ran in myself only by accident. He may have stopped aboard some friend's yacht last night, or at the Piping Rock Club, perhaps. He's not likely to dine a tome, either, I believe. Any message, seh?"

Hallard did not tell the valet that Mr. Merithew would not dine at home, and probably would not sup in paradise. He lowered his voice confidentially:

"Well, I'll tell you. I'm Mr. Brown, the jeweler. Mr. Merithew ordered me to make a bracelet for—for Miss Maryla Sokalska, you know. I was to deliver it to her. It's ready, but I've lost the address he gave me. Where can I find her?"

The valet's gasp was audible: "Miss Sokalska, seh? I didn't know as we had seen 'ide nor 'air of her almost a year past. I haven't an idea of her whereabouts, seh, if she has any."

This was discouraging. Hallard hung up the receiver and hurried from the booth to the Subway station at Bleecker Street. Nearly everybody on the up-town train was reading the *Gazette's* exclusive story. Persons who had bought other papers were more or less openly filching the news from those who held *Gazettes* in their hands. Some of the owners of *Gazettes* were jealously endeavoring to fold up their treasure from the public eye. Kindlier owners were actually waiting till those over-shoulder had finished before they turned the page.

Thus character makes itself known incessantly—infinitesimally. People's souls fairly perspire from them. The miser picks up the discarded newspaper and hugs it with automatic stinginess, while the spendthrift scatters his extra to the winds. The snooper neglects his own comic page to read his neighbor's editorial; the snob closes his eyes against the head-lines the strap-hanger rubs against his very nose.

Hallard gloated upon the success of his story with the pride of an author who sees his book in many hands. He promised the public an exciting serial in daily instalments.

He left the train at Twenty-third Street and hastened round the corner to the United Charities Building. Here he saw that a handsome limousine was waiting at the curb. A footman stood by the door with a linen lap-robe folded over his arm. He was democratic enough to be exchanging badinage out of the side of his mouth with the shabby driver of a shabbier taxicab drawn up aft of the limousine.

Suddenly the footman motioned the taxi-man to silence and came to attention. Two women appeared. Hallard at once recognized the elder of them as Mrs. Merithew. He observed at once that her hair was devoid of auburn. She was laughing delightedly over something. Plainly she knew nothing of her husband's fate. Then he noted that the young woman with Mrs. Merithew had copper-colored hair. Could she have been the— Hallard

checked his suspicion instantly, for he recognized her as Muriel Schuyler, the daughter of one of the wealthiest men in town.

Muriel Schuyler stood high among Hallard's few admirations, especially among the rich. She was young and handsome and full of vivacity, a daring horsewoman, a tireless dancer, opera-goer, and frequenter of the theaters, yet she was to be found often among the poor. Hallard had seen her once or twice moving through the slums like a saint of all help.

This renewed his suspicion. Since she knew the East Side so well she might have been there with Merithew. Again he banished the thought, and with disgust. He must not let himself get so low as to practise his cynicism on so good a girl as Muriel Schuyler. Had she not just come from a charity meeting? Was she not in the company of the dead man's wife?

Yet she was evidently agitated. But the committee meeting may have gone wrong. Her excitement might be merely due to her struggle with Mrs. Merithew, who was urging her to ride home in the smart Merithew limousine instead of the dingy taxicab that Miss Schuyler had picked up somewhere. Miss Schuyler was used to going about afoot or in taxies, since she went often in places where her father's motors would be too conspicuous.

Hallard watched the brief duel of the sort women indulge in when it comes to paying for the car-fare or the tea or the matinée tickets. Mrs. Merithew won at last. Miss Schuyler sighed, "Oh, all right!" and went to dismiss the taxi-driver. She paid him liberally enough to get his hat off his head and profuse thanks from his cynical lips, but there was a look of fond regret in his eyes at losing her, and the smile he gave her was more than commercial.

Before the footman could close the door of the limousine upon Miss Schuyler and her triumphant hostess Hallard pressed forward, lifting his hat:

"Oh, Mrs. Merithew!"

"Yes."

"I beg your pardon, but can you"—he hardly hesitated before he asked the ghoulish question—"can you tell me where I could find your husband? It's very important."

"My husband?" She smiled without mirth; then turned and murmured to Miss Schuyler, "A funny question to ask me!" She saw that Hallard had overheard, and she bit her hasty lips in regret. She tried to save the day by asking, "Have you tried his office?"

Perry's office had been a joke. It was the one place he could never be found. It was merely a bureau where a few clerks attended to the details of the estates he had inherited, kept his coupons shorn, and provided him with spending-money.

Hallard said that Merithew was not at his office. Mrs. Merithew next suggested:

"Did you try the Yacht Club or the Brook or the Racquet or—"

Hallard nodded to each.

She confessed her ignorance: "He's not often in town at this time of the year."

"He was in town last night," Hallard persisted.

"Then you know more than I do," said Mrs. Merithew, a trifle harshly, and nodded to the footman, who closed the door in spite of Hallard, and trotted round to his place by the chauffeur. The car moved forward, and Hallard followed to Fourth Avenue, staring after it with a relapse to pity. He almost spoke his thought aloud:

"Poor woman, a pretty home she's got to go to!"

He was glad that Muriel Schuyler would be with her at the crash of the news.

Merithew had not been a good husband, as everybody knew. These merry fellows abroad are apt to be distressing enough at home. Mrs. Merithew had worn a mask of complacency over a mien of despair. She did not

believe in any other divorce than the sort that death had already given her without warning or mercy. She had shunned the thought of releasing herself, for fear of the scandal. And now the greater scandal was to be her endless alimony.

Hallard remembered that occasional rumors had blown through newspaper offices, whispering that she was going to break with Perry after all. Most recently the corespondent-elect had been a Miss—or was it Mrs.?—Aphra Shaler.

Aphra Shaler had been the latest to waste Merithew's time and himself. Hallard wondered why he had not thought of her at once. He wondered if she did not have copper-colored hair. He wondered where to find her. He could learn by telephoning from the corner drug-store.

By the time he reached Twenty-third Street he had caught up with the Merithew limousine, which had been halted by a cross-town street-car. He felt an impulse to run and ask Mrs. Merithew if she knew where her rival lived and what the color of her hair might be. It would have been a brutal question to put to her, but Hallard was willing to ask anybody about anything.

At that moment, however, the street was invaded by one of those bellowing herds of news-bulls that run amuck now and then, usually without the excuse of important news. One of them charged on the Merithew limousine, waving an inarticulate "Huxtry! wuxtry! All about hor'ble murrurr!"

Hallard stood fast to see how Mrs. Merithew would take the shock. But she had been fooled too often by these swindlers to pay them any heed. She did not even glance at the man who waved the sheet of press-damp paper on which her name was printed in red. The policeman whistled. Her car moved on. She was spared at least the catastrophe of learning publicly what ruin had befallen her romance.

For her marriage had been a romance, begun in her

youth, when her girlhood dream came true and she captured "Merry Perry," the young, the handsome, the rich, the witty, the fascinating gallant.

She had been the envy of other women who coveted her treasure. And a treasure he had been for a full honeymoon. He had revealed the passionate devotion and the irresponsible flickerings of a bright bird. Then he had wavered and flown farther and farther. There were heartaches and rapturous flights back home, flights abroad together, hunting-parties, yacht solitudes, and yacht festivals. He was for ever in search of entertainment, but he found it more and more away from her. Her heart did not so much break as it filled with infinite little breaks like Satsuma ware.

She got used to heartbreaks, as people do, and sought for diversion where she could find it. Like a queen whose royal consort neglects her for a Du Barry or many of them, she established a little court of her own and conducted a home where respectability and brilliance were pretty well combined. In that home their son, Perry Merithew II., was reared, knowing little of his father, for Perry I. came and went like any other guest who was asked no questions as to his engagements.

Eventually the Merithews settled down to that sort of unofficial divorce which is known as an "understanding." She suffered less and less from his derelictions. She would have said that nothing he could do would grieve her any more — she had been able to laugh at the thought of being asked where he was. When she bit her lip it was not over her tragedy, but over her tactlessness.

Now she was to learn how horribly Perry Merithew could still hurt her. All the rest of her life the mention of her very name would recall the disaster of his end.

Henceforth the very home she was hurrying to now would be one of the sights of the town. The grotesque "Seeing New York" wagons would move past her château

in Fifth Avenue slowly, that the tourists might gape, not at its architecture, but at its tradition.

The twanging barkers would chant their sardonic serenades under her windows, crying, one after another, day after day:

"On the right, I draw your atten-shan tew the pala-shel resi-dince of the famis vic-timm of the greatist marder myst'ree of the day—Parry Marithoo, whewse bodee was found on the rewf of a tenemint in the dregs of the slums. This tenemint will be visited on this and every evening by our speshil touring-car on our famis tour of the harribill slums, inclooding the warld-famis Bow-ree; the haunts of Chinytown with its harribill opium-dens; Mulb'ry Bend, the home of the Black Hand, and all the other tarribill sights of the night life of this great and wickid city. Car leaves our offis at twelve o'clock midnight: all inclooded for the modist sum of one dollar; reducshun for parties. The home of Parry Marithoo, ladies and gentlemin, now inhabited by his widow."

CHAPTER V

THE thing that Hallard was most ashamed of was his failure to think of Aphra Shaler the moment he thought of Perry Merithew.

Aphra was one of the unfailing supply of wrong women that every small town produces as every small town produces poets, soldiers, financiers, and statesmen who smother there or migrate to more crowded opportunities.

When Mr. Gray was writing his Elegy in his country churchyard he devoted his noble regrets solely to "the destiny obscure" of the good, the beautiful, and the great who had suffered oblivion: the gem in the unfathomed cave, the flower in the desert, the mute inglorious Milton, the village Hampden, the blood-guiltless Cromwell.

He might have gone farther and found in other of those "narrow cells" the frustrated fames of base metals, poisonous plants, mute, non-notorious Messalinas, village Pompadours, and Lady Emma Hamiltons of limited guilt.

The great cities produce enough depravity for home consumption, Heaven knows; but they attract also the ambitious village Delilahs who are discontented with their local Samsons, who scorn the farmer's homely vices, the hamlet's austere duplicities, and the shoddy profligacies of the smaller cities. They dream of larger opportunities, where talent of one sort or another can prosper to magnificence.

Aphra Shaler was one of these. The daughter of an almost too virtuous father and mother in a four-corners of Arcadian innocence—of appearance—she had turned

her father's hair white and got herself turned out of the house before she was sixteen.

Then she obtained a place in a small-town factory where her smiles manufactured domestic earthquakes successively for laborers, foremen, the superintendent, and one of the partners. She found this place too cold for her.

The advancing Napoleonne moved next to a middle-sized city, where she flourished exceedingly till a selfish and inconsiderate young married cashier committed, as it were, hara-kiri on her door-step. His suicide was deplored, but when it was found that he had been also an embezzler and had almost emptied a small savings-bank at Aphra's feet, the heartless public made the place too hot for her, and she was offered a choice between a cozy-corner in jail and a seat in the next train out of town.

Dazed at the extent of human heartlessness, she drifted to the wicked metropolis as the tiny prattling brooklet lapses to the cruel sea. In New York she found the competition fierce and the industry overcrowded, but her gifts and her inalienable look of innocence helped her to prosper intermittently. Her extravagance was indeed the only check on her commercial importance. She took the cash and let the credit go—also the creditors. This brought her in occasional conflict with a class of collectors who rejected her tears and promises and even her smiles as non-negotiable. Otherwise her success in her chosen career was almost perfect.

We are always capable of being amazed to incredulity by the oldest things in the world, such as the fact that sunsets are frequently crimson, that violets come out of the black ground along about springtime, that lilies aspire from manure, that the lightning does not strike the unjust, and that women can be very, very wicked without losing their dimples, their ingenuous stares, their infantile peaches-and-cream, their childish laughter, or their April tears.

EMPTY POCKETS

Aphra Shaler was of the type whose fresh young beauty lawyers point out to jurors as proof of innocence. She had thus far escaped appearing before the courts, except in one or two battles with dressmakers whom she did not believe in paying. But she was constantly on trial before the men whom she canvassed while making them think they were paying suit to her.

She had a positive genius for weeping at just the right time to just the right extent for bedewing her cheeks without inflaming her nose. She could ensconce herself in the best corner of a man's heart—even of a good man's heart—like a little worm in an apple blossom. And gradually by feeding on his noblest motives she would eat her way out and leave a rotten hole in his life.

Warm-hearted gentlemen who had not been brutes enough to despise a distraught girl in an anguish of perplexity found themselves preyed upon from within and then disgraced to the outer eye. Perhaps it hurts even an apple to be gnawed by a worm, and to feel itself destroyed upon the bough, and to drop at last from eminence to the slums under the trees.

The world is full of Aphra Shalers and always has been. They are the loudest bewailers of their own lost virtues, if one can be said to lose what one has never found. They denounce their victims as their conquerors—no doubt the harpies scolded the very bones of the men who invaded the sanctity of their islands just because the harpies were singing a few little innocent songs and meaning no harm.

Aphra Shaler always used to tell her next victim how her last victim (who in the telling was always her first victor) had won his way to her very soul with fiendish skill, and then deserted her with inconceivable treachery. She used to beat her sofa-pillow with a fist full of tear-soaked handkerchief, and groan:

"Oh, it's a man's world, I tell you! Nobody cares what a man does! But the woman—one step and she is

never forgiven!—never! The man escapes, but the woman pays—and *pays*—and PAYS!"

Thus Aphra would declaim, simply clad in the demurest costume obtainable in the Rue de la Paix, in a simply gorgeous little apartment in a simply unmentionable hotel. She was not exactly insincere, for it is almost impossible to be truly insincere—people keep mixing consistency with sincerity. Aphra was honestly forgetting the little private hell she had populated with young men and old who had given her their innocence, their trust, their ardor, their homes, their reputations, their characters, their bank accounts, and already in one case, life itself.

None of these men dared to blame Aphra. Even in their own hearts they hardly dared to blame Aphra. They would have laughed themselves to scorn before the world had a chance to laugh. For a man must be at least a good sport, whatever else he is of knave or fool. But the wives of some of Aphra's victims blamed Aphra, and took their husbands back with a forgiveness that was not entirely complimentary—the forgiveness one extends to a blundering imbecile.

Thus finally Aphra had landed Perry Merithew, or, rather, as she explained it, persistently unfortunate child that she was, she was so cruelly misjudged by a heartless world that she fell at last into the powers of the arch-roué himself, as Satan finally captures the wretch whom the minor implets have lured astray.

The fact was that Perry had heard a deal about Aphra, and had despised her till he met her at a dance-palace one night. It had needed just one look into those limpid eyes to show him what a ewe lamb she was. Truth fairly glowed in that piteous mien, a face like Joan's of Arc in the flames where the perfidious English put her in spite of her saintliness. Merithew had only to hear that unsullied, unsuspecting voice, and clasp that timorous, hot hand, to know that Aphra Shaler was the victim of one of

the most loathsome conspiracies of slander ever confederated.

Like all men who know the world too well, Perry had long ago lost all his original illusions and had manufactured still more and bigger illusions to take their places —as we grow hard molar and canine and bicuspid gumbones when our pretty little milk-teeth fall out.

Men of Merithew's experience come to know so much wickedness in innocent guise, and so much innocence under wicked appearances, that they get quite turned about.

For two years now Merry Perry had been attracting the attention of all New York by his lavish efforts to console the disconsolate Aphra. Occasionally they had quarreled and parted, but their reunions were inevitable. Perry kept up costly attempts to make her forget the cruelty of other men in the generosity of one, to cheat her of a tear or charm her to a smile by way of a diamond sunburst or a six-cylinder runabout.

She could weep a new ring out of him in twenty minutes by the clock, and when she pounded the sofa-cushion and began her moan, "The woman pays and pays and—" he usually beat her to the third "pays."

Aphra was nearly as convinced as Perry was that she had led a tragic existence and was mere flotsam hurled by the relentless waves of life against the rocky cliffs of a world which would never let a fallen woman prosper. And so in all sincerity she kept Perry Merithew captive by his Samaritanism. He was devoted to indecency by his best motives of decency and chivalry and by his illusions.

And the two of them became almost a national byword as an atrocious instance of such shamelessness as only a sink of iniquity like New York would tolerate.

"O justice of the world!"

Perry's intrigue with Aphra was well known to Hallard. He had written Aphra up once or twice before.

Whatever his personal opinions, he had never sullied his reportorial pen by calling her any names. Aphra, indeed, had always the best treatment the press could afford her. Her beauty was advertised in reading-matter to an extent that made actresses writhe; her portraits were published with a conspicuousness that spoiled the day for press-agents.

But at this moment Hallard, who could remember so much about Aphra, could not for the life of him remember the color of her hair. Men ordinarily forget, if they note at all, the pigmentation of their most intimate acquaintances and relations.

Hallard had a queer feeling that Aphra's hair had been yellow once and black another time. "I'm getting old," he groaned to himself. "I've got to cut out the booze."

He called up a few people who would be likely to know where Aphra lived. He finally learned her latest address, and asked about her hair. The voice came back:

"When I saw her yesterday it was lovely auburn, fairest village of the plain. Why?"

"Much obliged!" said Hallard, and darted away. Outside her apartment hotel in the late forties he found a handsome motor loaded with baggage. Inside, the ebony telephone-operator informed him that Mrs. Shaler was just leaving town and positively could not see nobody. Hallard went up to her door, nevertheless, and her ebony maid told him the same thing. He walked right in and found Aphra kneeling and using holy words—she was trying to persuade a suit-case to be a steamer-trunk.

While the maid was staring at him like a mask of onyx and ivory Hallard knelt on Aphra's suit-case and snapped the catches for her. She stared at him as if he were a genie just bubbled out of a bottle. He stared at her to make sure of that hair. He swore internally. She had on a hat and a motor-veil that completely swathed her locks.

She demanded with immediate wrath:

"How did you get in here? Who are you, anyway? Whatcha want? I'm in a hurry."

"Why, don't you remember me?" Hallard asked, with infantile surprise. "I wrote a lovely story about you once."

"Oh, did you! Well, I got no time for stories. I'm in a hurry."

He only grinned and wheedled:

"Sit down and make yourself at home. Take off your hat and have a cup of tea."

He took off his hat, tossed it on a table, and dropped into a chair, after removing a newspaper from it. It almost burnt his fingers, for it was the Merithew extra of the *Gazette*. He said nothing, but he felt that he knew the reason for Aphra's flight.

Aphra was not in one of her helpless moods. She rose and handed him his hat with a curt, "Good-by!"

Hallard set out his net. "Just half a mo', Mrs. Shaler. I'm getting up a Sunday special on the various types of beauty. It's to be a swell thing. I've got several of the best-lookers in town. A couple of members of the Four Hundred among 'em. I want your picture to represent the auburn-haired type. Will you give me a photograph before you go?"

He thought he saw a start in her eyes.

"I haven't got auburn hair. I'm an ash-blonde."

"Good Lord!" said Hallard. "Since when?"

"For some time."

"But you had auburn hair this morning."

Aphra threw him a quick glance, then answered, reluctantly:

"You're another! It was yesterday I changed."

Hallard pleaded: "Are you sure you're not auburn? I was wanting to call you the true Titian Venus."

"Titian nothin'!" said Aphra, glancing anxiously at her bracelet-watch.

"I'm from Missouri," said Hallard. "You gotta show me."

She snatched out a hat-pin, whipped away her hat and veil, and disclosed a massive coiffure of a dull-ivory tint, in the shadows almost a pallid mauve.

"Am I auburn or am I ash?" she demanded.

"Ashes of roses!" Hallard sighed.

Then she jammed her hat on again and drove the pin home.

The thrust of that pin gave Hallard an idea. The hat-pin as a weapon had been very popular of late in melodrama and magazine. Perhaps that very pin or its twin had done for Perry Merithew. He wished he had it. He tried to see if the head of it were an amethyst in a claw, but her hand covered it now and the veil hid it when it was in place.

"You had auburn hair yesterday?" Hallard persisted.

"In the morning, yes," snapped Aphra. "In the afternoon, no."

"Who dyed it for you?"

"That's my affair."

"How long would it take a bottle of peroxide to work if you emptied it on your head?"

"Well, of all the nerve!" she cried.

The maid appeared: "Miss Aphry, yo' cheffoor says if you goin' git to Noo Juzzy befo' sundown you got to take yo' feet in yo' han'."

Aphra seized the suit-case, the maid caught up two others, and they moved to the door. Hallard let the maid go, then intercepted Aphra. He closed the hall door behind him and said:

"Oh, by the way, have you heard that Perry Merithew was murdered last night?"

"No—yes."

"It doesn't seem to shock you much."

"Why should it? We had a big quarrel the other day."

"A quarrel, eh? Then you mustn't leave town."

"Oh, mustn't I? Who's to stop me?"

"I'm going to."

Her lip crinkled with angry contempt as she sneered:

"Say! You reporters are doing all the policemen's work, ain't you—aren't you?"

"Not quite. But I want you to stay here."

"Got a warrant?"

"No, but—"

"Then you get out of my way or I'll pin you to that door with this." She put her hand to her hat.

Hallard wanted to get that pin, but not in the flesh. He had no desire to be found there as victim number two. He opened the door and entered the elevator with Aphra. He murmured over her shoulder:

"If you will let the *Gazette* take care of you, I can put you where nobody will find you and we'll pay you anything you want."

Aphra laughed. Hallard offered to carry her suitcase for her.

"Not on your life," said Aphra.

She climbed into the car. Hallard was desperate enough to have appealed to a policeman, but none was in view. He put his hand on her arm as she settled alongside her chauffeur.

"One last question," he said.

"What is it?"

"Where were you last night?"

"None of your damned business."

"Where are you going now?"

"The same to you and many of them. Go on."

As the car moved away she called back to him: "Take a tip from me. Look up Muriel Schuyler. He liked her and she had copper-colored wool. Her own, too!"

The car shot away as if a gun propelled it. Hallard sniffed at her suggestion and set it down to jealousy or a desperate ruse to shift suspicion. He went back to her apartment to interview the maid. She gave him one glance and slammed the door in his face. Then he heard a bolt shot, and a mellow voice came through the panels:

"Man, they ain't no use pesterin' me. I don't know nothin' a tall abote nothin' a tall. I'm the know-nothin'est nigro they is. Good day!"

And that was the last word that could be drawn from the wood.

Still Hallard felt that there was excuse enough from his standards to justify him in telephoning City Editor Ulery about what he had turned up. He gave Ulery some general notions of the proper treatment of Aphra Shaler and reminded him that there were several large pictures of her already in stock. Aphra Shaler's face consequently appeared on the front page of a "postscript extra" with adroit reference to her affair with Merithew and to her reasons for flight. If the police wanted to make use of Hallard's discoveries they could take them from his bulletins.

He told Ulery that he hoped it would not be necessary for him to go to New Jersey. He hated New Jersey. He begged Ulery to call up the New Jersey correspondents and set them on her track. Perhaps they could pick her up at one of the ferry-houses as soon as she arrived on the foreign soil of Hoboken, Weehawken, or Jersey City.

Ulery promised to take care of that end of the matter. Then he told Hallard that there was a new development. One of the Central Office men had let fall a hint that the job looked like the work of "Red Ida." The word had gone out to bring her in.

Hallard laughed so hard that he hurt Ulery's ear:

"Poor Ida Ganley! She's been very useful to the cops. She told me once that whenever they were at a standstill they always picked on her. She says she's been sent in for everybody's crimes but her own. It's a frame-up, I tell you. They haven't got anything on that poor little pickpocket."

"Nothing but her copper-colored hair."

"Cleopatra had it, too, and I'll bet she's no farther

away. And what would Merithew be doing in the society of a crook like Ida?"

"She's a swell looker when she's ragged out, and they say she was seen dancing with him at a tango-palace. She's done a little blackmail and some badger-work with that gunman husband of hers. What's his name?—he ran the stuss-house right near there in Allen Street. And the Central Office tells our man that both Ida and her man have lammistered since this morning."

Hallard sighed: "Well, I'll nose round. But I don't believe Perry Merithew ever fell for any East Side gun-girl."

"He was robbed, wasn't he? His money was all gone; his watch had been taken from the chain; his famous diamond was missing from his finger; and his inevitable black pearl was ripped out of his necktie — good word *inevitable black pearl!* I'll make a note of it. Go to it!"

This Ida theory might convince Ulery and the police, but Hallard's reportorial instinct rejected it.

In any case the dilemma had two sharp horns: how could a delicate plutocrat like Perry Merithew become interested enough in any slum queen to follow her to such a grimy district? Why should any of the women of his own circle have taken him there?

Perhaps he had been murdered in some other place and his body transported thither. This seemed more improbable than any other theory, seeing that there were at least two rivers far more accessible for the disposition of the remains. And yet it was hardly less likely that Perry Merithew should have been taken there dead than that he should have gone there alive.

Of course the aristocrats did visit the slums occasionally, those of them who had gentle hearts and who knew that they were in no more danger among the tenements than among the palaces. Muriel Schuyler, for instance, had gone about in the slums with little less constraint than she had felt in being alone on Fifth Avenue.

Perhaps she had taken Perry Merithew there. She could have persuaded him to go, if any one could. But what could have persuaded her to trust herself alone with him? Why should so wealthy a girl have robbed him and left him? If some one else killed him in her presence, why had she not given the alarm? After such a scene, how could she have had the face to ride with Mrs. Merithew in pretended ignorance?

Yet why had Aphra Shaler tossed her name to him?

CHAPTER VI

HALLARD was as dissatisfied as a lean wolf on a cold night, finding plenty of spoor to whet his hunger, but reaching a barred fold at the end of every trail.

The matter of Aphra Shaler tantalized him. There was so much that was suspicious about her that he began to be less certain of her guilt. He had learned one great lesson of life—to suspect suspicion; to keep it alert and elastic, but never to trust it, never to mistake it for evidence.

And yet he must never dismiss suspicion with contempt. The idlest suspicion was usually based on a complex of experiences. It served with men for what women call intuition. It was contemptibly untrustworthy, and yet it won occasional amazing triumphs.

Why did a woman like Aphra Shaler mention a woman like Muriel Schuyler? Was it the natural jealousy of the foul for the fair? Or had it some specific cause?

It was worth looking into in any case. At least Miss Schuyler might help with some further information. He knew that if he applied at the door of the Schuyler home he would be turned away like a book-agent. If he telephoned he would be similarly fended off by some secretary or servant. Homes like the Schuylers' were so infested with impertinent strangers that they had to put up screens of all sorts. Their reporter-screen was particularly fine of mesh and strong of wire.

Still, a try must always be had. He would buzz around the Schuyler house. It would pique the public appetite to attach another great name to the great name of Meri-

thew. And it was easy enough to lug it in. The courts count a citizen innocent till he or she is proved guilty, but they lock him or her up till they make sure. The newspapers imply guilt till the innocence is proved. An "It is said" or "There is a rumor" or "An informant stated" is excuse enough to admit anything to the columns.

Hallard took a Fifth Avenue stage up-town. There were two copper-haired women aboard. People were staring at them curiously. Along the street Hallard saw dozens of copper heads. He noted that passers-by were nudging one another and turning to stare after them. There would be a great industry in alibi among all these auburn-tressed folk for the next few days.

He descended from the 'bus a block below the noble mansion of the Schuylers. He had not yet selected a promising device for getting into the presence. Still, he climbed the steps, trusting to his attendant divinity to provide him with a sop for the Cerberus.

The door swung open as he reached for the button. A young man was just being let out. Hallard fell back unnoticed, wondering if the man might be some reporter who had preceded him. The small black hand-bag was reassuring. He was either a piano-tuner or a physician. The butler solved the uncertainty. He was saying:

"I hope it's nothing serious, doctor."

"Oh no, a little too much excitement, that's all. But it's better to have the nurse."

"Yes, sir; I always say 'an ounce of prevention'—Yes, sir; yes, doctor."

"When the nurse comes tell her not to wake Miss Muriel if she's asleep."

"Oh no, sir. No, indeed, doctor."

"Tell her I left instructions with Miss Muriel's maid."

"Yes, doctor. You'll be looking in again soon, won't you?"

"In an hour or two. Good-by."

"Good-by, doctor."

Hallard let him close the door without making himself known. He caught a glimpse of the servant's face as he bowed. It was the face of a veteran soldier, quick with deference to a superior, quick with hostility to an intruder. His face was softened with anxiety now. So was the face of the doctor, who turned and plodded down the steps to the little car of which he was his own chauffeur.

Hallard caught up with him as he was about to get in. "One moment, doctor, please. I was about to call on Miss Schuyler, but I overheard you say that she was ill. It's nothing serious, is it?"

"Oh no; but she's prostrated with shock. She was with poor Mrs. Merithew when she learned of her husband's death. Yo knew of that, didn't you?"

"I saw something in one of the papers."

"Muriel—er, Miss Schuyler was with her when the news came, and Mrs. Merithew clung to her and poured out her grief to her. She took it very hard, and the poor girl has such a big heart that it nearly killed her. She sent for me to help quiet Mrs. Merithew, and when I'd done that I brought Miss Schuyler home. She'll be all right, but it was a terrible drain on her strength."

"I don't suppose I'd better call, then?"

"I should say not. I've left orders that nobody is to see her, not even her father and mother, till she's better."

"Did she know Mr. Merithew very well?"

"No, no; only casually. He wasn't her type and she wasn't his."

Hallard was achingly eager to ask the doctor his name, but before he could phrase the query to his liking the car was moving off. He made note of its number, however, and by telephoning to a friend at police headquarters soon learned that the number belonged to the car of Dr. Clinton Worthing.

Hallard remembered him dimly as a young hospital interne he had met at an accident a year or so before. It was a strange leap upward from the tail of an ambu-

lance to the post of physician in ordinary to the Schuyler heiress. Hallard's memory of Worthing uncovered other memories. He believed that he had seen the young doctor in Muriel's company somewhere.

Where? When?

And then fatigue overtook his memory. His brain, like an over-driven horse, calmly lay down in its shafts and would not be kicked or yanked or coaxed to its feet. He climbed aboard a down-town stage. He was too weary to mount the shaking stairway; he squeezed in among the matrons and damozels. In the low voices he caught the name of Merithew. It irritated him. He felt like a man fallen among brambles. There was no repose in inaction, and whichever way he turned was a new thorn. He had scratched his eyes out among them and he must thresh about among the brambles till he scratched them in again.

He decided that he was hungry and thirsty. It was not safe for him to drink at such a time. Taking his first glass was like stepping aboard an unknown steamer bound for an unknown port.

He sentenced himself to coffee and those innocent white biscuit-like things that harsh experience has named "sinkers."

As he entered a dairy lunch-room he fell back to make way for a young shop-girl who was wearing a tooth-pick coquettishly in her teeth. Her head was bundled in swaddles of copper-colored hair. Hallard's heart stumbled in its beat. He stared after her, tempted to pursue her. She vanished in a chaos of traffic. He said, "Perhaps she is the one."

But he was too fagged to run after her. He entered the lunch-room. The cashier perched in her cage like a wax automaton on exhibition had copper-colored hair. It was heaped up high enough to conceal a dozen clippings.

There was red in the hair of the waitress at the next table who chewed gum with one side of her mouth while she

demanded with the other, "Whatcha gona have?" Hallard began to feel himself bewitched.

Nearly every one in the restaurant was reading about Perry Merithew. Every newspaper gave his name as much prominence as its customs permitted it to give to any one or anything.

A man at Hallard's table showed his paper to the waitress and said, with a clever smile: "Say, kiddo, was you the dame that done it? You got them copper-colored coils all right, all right."

The waitress laughed good-naturedly as she set down his coffee and syrup-pitcher and skirled the buckwheat-cakes his way:

"You're the eight' guy's ast me that 's afternoon. If you'd 'a' went to the Lady Piano Movers' ball las' night and sor me dancin' every dance till breakfast-time you'd know I been too busy to commit any moiders."

When Hallard went to the cashier with his check he had to wait while a dapper jester from a haberdashery slipped a little persiflage through the bars:

"Better get your excuses ready, girlie. The flatties are lookin' for you in that little Merithew matter."

The cashier laughed loftily:

"I should worry and get a wrinkle! If little Me ever got close enough to one of those kind of millionaires for him to get his hands in me wool I'd never cut myself loose. I'd stay right with him."

Hallard shot his money under the wicket and hurried away, gleaning as he went a handful of toothpicks from an enormous sheaf of them erected on a table.

In the street he almost ran into a copper-colored lady climbing into a taxicab. He saw copper hair everywhere.

He telephoned Ulery, "I'm after Red Ida, but I think I'm batty."

It is a serious business being a reporter-detective. When a plain detective knows nothing he can keep quiet

and look wise and let his salary work. A reporter-detective on space rates must go right on reporting.

Hallard resolved once more that his best hope of tracing Perry Merithew's companion was to keep as close to the dead man's own history as possible and work outward from that.

It would be a pleasanter task than pursuing Aphra Shaler into New Jersey, or Maryla Sokalska from her obscure beginnings, or Red Ida in her sordid career. And it would make better copy, too, since the public has an unslakable thirst for the petty chronicles of the rich, while the poor can interest it only by some desperate deed.

Appealing from Perry Merithew dead to Perry Merithew alive, the first question was not so much how did he happen to be on the roof as how did he happen to be in New York at all during that bitterly trying week?

Thousands of sight-seers from other cities sweated along the streets to see the tall buildings and imagine one another New-Yorkers. But all the true New-Yorkers who could afford to be absent kept aloof from the city. And Perry Merithew could afford it.

Nobody of means came in except on business or charity, and Perry Merithew had little business and less charity. Mrs. Merithew and Muriel Schuyler had been lured in, doubtless, by some Samaritan appeal, but Perry was only a self-Samaritan. A strong motive, indeed, must have driven him from his seaside resorts or his country club to the frying city.

What was the motive? Who inspired it?— But the Hallards are depressing company at best. They do not make themselves or anybody else happy. Whether they do the world any good or not it is hard to say. It is evident that the world does them very little good, and gives them very little pleasure.

Hallard used to say that he "knew New York backward." He spoke truer than he thought. He was for

ever working from crimes to criminals. He met his people after they had done their worst. It was then too late to realize how well or ill they had meant, or how gradually they had arrived at a crisis that must have dismayed them as much as the rest of the world. For the man who finds another standing with a smoking revolver over a victim is no more surprised than the man who finds himself in such an attitude. But thereafter it is impossible for anybody, even for the man himself, to study his past without seeing it darkly, as through the red glass of its climax.

Hallard back-trailed Merithew's life till he could have written a biography as full as Boswell's. He followed numberless clues and they led him into numerous labyrinths, up countless blind alleys. He finally narrowed his list of copper-haired possibilities down to a few young women of such variety in origin, quality, and motive that they had hardly anything in common except the community of traits and interests that make humans human and women women: hunger, desire, ambition, fear, vanity, and such impulses.

These women came to New York with more or less of innocence and more or less of curiosity.

There was Aphra Shaler, the little pig who brought herself to market: she came down from "up-state" and crossed the river on a Forty-second Street ferry. There was Maryla Sokalska, who was born at sea shortly before her parents passed the Statue of Liberty in their flight from the poverty and oppression of Russian Poland. There was Red Ida, who came over the Brooklyn Bridge from Sheepshead Bay, where she was born. There was "Pet" Bettany, who was born in New England, but was the least Puritanical of young women; she was born rich and lived rich and always bewailed her poverty, and came first from her native Newport to her adopted New York in a Pullman drawing-room. And there was Muriel Schuyler, who came to New York in the way that humorists

declare no one ever comes—by way of being born in New York.

These women learned the city forward through wide young eyes; it thrilled their red young hearts. Perry Merithew, too, thrilled them all with his love of beauty, his flair for happiness, his tender-hearted heartlessness, his cautious recklessness.

Rather than trace the story backward as Hallard did, rather than travel the city under the guidance of a newspaper jade who knew his New York too well, and whose few moments of elation were due to the finding-out of depressing things, it were more congenial, surely, to tell the story as time unrolled it—forward, without knowledge of the goal. It is an old device, and a creaky, to turn the calendar back for a year, but it saves the reader from acquiring history upside down and from viewing the gorgeous city through the yellow spectacles of a jaundiced cynic.

Therefore, if it please the court, it ceases to be the month of July, 1914; it becomes the month of August, 1913.

CHAPTER VII

FOR it was just about a year before Perry Merithew's death that Muriel Schuyler took note of him for the first time. She had heard as much of him as a young girl only recently come out was likely to hear of the beau of the generation immediately preceding. She began to go to big dances shortly after he quit going to them.

Like him she rose from the original New York stock. The first of her name had landed on Manhattan Island before there was a New York, when there was only a Dutch trading-post called Nieuw Amsterdam. The Dutch Schuylers grew English and wealthy with the town, and, so far as age makes aristocracy, they were aristocratic. So far as aristocracy consists in belonging to a family that has for some time been wearing good clothes, eating choice food, being well cared for and waited on, traveling for pleasure, not being too much worried about money, and associating with people of the same sort, they were aristocratic. Like all aristocrats they had their fields of ignorance, their limitations in things they could afford, their moods of bad manners and wickedness.

Up to this time Muriel had spent only a little of her life in New York. The town was to her what it was to the masters of the sailing-vessels that called it their home port—it was their place of departure. The family had been driven out of her birthplace on lower Fifth Avenue by the ever-rising tide of trade soon after she had been born there. She trundled her hoop in Washington Square a summer or two, and then she was trundled out to the country home; thence she was carried abroad and she

forgot her American for English, and English for Italian, and Italian for French, according to her mother's residence. When her mother returned to America, Muriel had to learn her native language all over again.

Her new home faced Central Park, and she rode her pony or drove her little side-cart there or fed the animals peanuts. Except for the hours when she was the victim of her governess's determination to fill her curl-curtained head with learning, most of her girlhood was spent out of doors at the country home or in schools abroad.

Always her health and her happiness were the first demands of her parents, who were almost as simple and homely as their names, Jacob and Susan. They themselves had found life sweet and kept it clean and beautiful. They had known little trouble, they had thought kindly thoughts, been well amused, had eaten good food, tasted always the best wines, worn the best clothes, dwelt gracefully among luxuries. They had kept up their lifelong acquaintance with good horses and brought Muriel up to the saddle.

Like her mother and her father, Muriel could ride almost any horse almost anywhere, through bog and brier, over fence and water-jump, in Rotten Row, the Bois, or Central Park. She could run her own car, and her exploits with a motor-boat were terrifying to behold. She knew a lot about dogs and their breeding. She managed her father's palatial kennels, where the famous Schuyler collies were reared. She knew something about cattle, and saw to it that her father's noble Holsteins had their teeth brushed every day and were groomed till they looked like drawings in black-and-white. She was a good fellow among the young men, and entirely too busy to fall in love. Such flirtations as she had indulged in were hardly more than experiments in comradeship. She had known as little of sorrow or poverty, of toil or love, or vice or crime, as a girl could know who has eyes and ears and can read or listen. She had never encountered death or despair or passion.

The longer such knowledge is delayed the more likely it is to come in avalanches when it starts to come. Muriel knew far less of the dark side of the world at twenty than Red Ida had known at ten. She poised on the threshold of life as one peering into a dark and haunted house.

And now in August of the year 1913 she was just "running into" New York on her father's yacht because the old boy was childishly eager to have her with him when he inspected the latest addition to his princely collection, the complete library accumulated in Northmarch Castle by the Dukes of Bray. As soon as Jacob Schuyler had heard that the collection was to be sold he had cabled the men who kept him informed of the big doings in the international book-market: "Buy me it." The dealers sent back a price that crackled on the cables. Jacob retorted by wire: "Buy me it." They bought him it.

The loot had arrived at the port of New York a week before. Schuyler's private librarian had eased the books through the customs, unpacked and arranged them in colonies by subjects, and then telegraphed old Jacob that his treasure was ready for his inspection.

As usual in August the eastern seaboard was cowering under a hot wave, and New York was in the throes of it, but Jacob would not wait for cooler weather. He must see his new books, "the old boy's new toys," as Muriel called them.

She came in with him on his yacht. As they were skirting the Long Island coast they made out dead ahead a mighty pother in the flashing waters of the Sound.

"It's a motor-boat," Muriel cried, from the shade-deck, where they sat.

It rose from the water like a dragon-fly and stormed past them overhead.

"It's an airship," she amended.

It was both. The sailing-master informed them that it was Mr. Merithew's new hydro-aeroplane.

Schuyler stared at it and smiled: "It's the first time anybody ever looked up to Perry Merithew."

"Is he so bad?" Muriel queried.

"He's a scandal to his name, a thorn in his family pride, and a beast to his wife."

"He's not afraid, anyway," Muriel interposed. "He risks his life lightly."

"He's not risking an article of any particular value," Jacob growled.

"I like to see a man that's not afraid of anything," Muriel pondered aloud, her eyes still on the swooping dragon-fly.

"The less you see of Perry Merithew the better for you," her father muttered.

This was enough to make the man fascinating even to a girl like Muriel—especially to a girl like Muriel, with a mind of her own and a curiosity for people and things. She did not forget Merithew when he vanished into the sunlight.

Schuyler beckoned to his secretary and said:

"Oh, Chivot, would you mind calling the office and seeing if there's any reason for me to come down to-day? It's pretty hot."

The precise Mr. Chivot went to the wireless operator and the air at the masthead began to sputter and snap. Later Mr. Chivot returned to say: "The office telephones the wireless station that the president of the board of the T. M. and K. Railway is in town and would like to see you, sir."

Schuyler sighed: "Oh, all right. Tell him I'll run down soon as we land."

The snapping sparks at the masthead told the office that. The yacht, like a duchess out shopping, picked its way down the crowded water street through Hell Gate, and past the doleful islands of Randall, Ward, and Blackwell, under the Queensborough Bridge, and over the

Muriel forgot her anger and her danger in

remorse for what she had not caused.

under-river tunnels, till eventually it reached the New York Yacht Club's landing-float at the eastern foot of Twenty-third Street. The yacht club's station was the most modest of the structures clustered thereabouts: the old moored ship called the "Deep Sea Hotel," a training-ship or two, a free public bath, a shelter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and a recreation pier where mothers sat all day in the cool moist breezes, lifting their eyes from their sewing to watch their infants at play and see the endless promenade of the river traffic. There, also, a city-paid band pours out a not too classical program now and then, and in the evenings there are nooks where the vitally important industry of flirtation furnishes the raw material for the dangerous laboratory of matrimony.

Muriel liked to see these places and the majestic hospitals that dignify the water-front. They certified to her that the poor of New York were abundantly cared for and very happy and contented—or ought to be.

One of her father's touring-cars was waiting at the landing-slip. She expected to ride down to his office with him, but he said that the sun was too hot and the journey too long for her. He insisted on making the trip in a taxicab and sending her home in the car.

Like an eager child on Christmas morning he made her promise not to look at the new books till he could enter the library with her.

Muriel flung him a kiss of farewell and hopped into the seat by the chauffeur, with whom she chatted in a care-free forenoon mood. Jacques Parny adored her, for she spoke his French like a Parisienne and she knew nearly as much as he did about machinery.

For all the beauty of her face, for all the opulence of her copper-colored hair, her heart as yet belonged rather to a wholesome boy than to a young woman of romantic capabilities.

On all the streets of the middle East Side the school-free

children were bouncing about like popcorn on a hot skillet. Particularly lively they were in the "Gas-house District" which Muriel was now traversing. On First Avenue it was almost impossible to steer the car. The chauffeur turned off into a less-cluttered side-street. There were children here, too, but he quickened his speed to pass a lumbering express-truck. From behind it leaped a little boy.

He was poor and scrawny and a cripple. He was playing the favorite game of the New York streets. Mysteriously the boys call it "cat." You lay a short stick on the pavement, tap it sharply with a longer stick; it flies into the air, then you hit at it with your bat, and if you are swift and lucky you can score a run to the lamp-post and back before the "cat" is fielded in. But you must act quickly and keep one eye in the back of your head, for the streets are full of danger.

The cripple, after waiting for the express-wagon to pass, knocked a beautiful fly through the hostile lines. The fielders let out the terrific screech of New York boyhood at play. The cripple dashed for the lamp-post.

Muriel's car caught him in the air as if it were the club of a giant batsman. It sent him sprawling into space and then slithering shapelessly till the curbstone checked him.

The car came to a stop as Muriel's scream brought the women to the windows and doors all along the block. Her voice was a different noise in the familiar clamor of their street. Immediately people began to run and jabber and gesticulate with menace.

The chauffeur turned to Muriel: "There is no policeman in sight, Miss. Shall I make a run for it?"

Muriel was tempted almost beyond resistance, but she shook her head. A glimpse at that pitiful heap on the ground denied her the right to escape.

She was about to get down and pick him up when a cobblestone struck the car, splintering the glass of the

wind-shield. A moment later another stone was flung. This one hit Muriel in the forehead. A mob was gathering to demand revenge.

Muriel had run into life. She was going to know New York. She was going to learn the importance of empty pockets that seem full, but prove empty when too great need arises; of pockets that are empty because they leak gold faster than the most amiable fairies can replenish them; and of pockets that are empty because the coppers that drip into them must be clutched out instantly to bribe a little longer delay from the bailiffs of ill-fortune.

In the most roundabout way she was going to make the acquaintance of Perry Merithew. An hour or two ago he had passed through her sky like an angel mounted on an iron steed. But it was this encounter with the crippled street brat that brought her into the sphere of Perry Merithew and involved her in his disaster. If, indeed, she had been a little less brave and a little less tender she might have escaped knowing Perry Merithew for years. If she had told her chauffeur to put on full speed and run away from the scene of this accident she would have unwittingly run away from almost all that makes up this book. And all the lives of all the people in it would have run otherwise. On such little threads of decision hang the destinies of the world.

CHAPTER VIII

NEVER again in her existence, perhaps, would young Muriel Schuyler be quite so amazed as she was then. Without an enemy in the world, without knowledge of a soul that had ever hated her or tried to harm her, surrounded always with luxury and protection, just landed from her father's yacht, and motoring quietly to his town home, she found herself in one astounding moment surrounded by a fierce mob of men and women accusing her of the murder of a crippled boy.

The boy had leaped straight out of nothing into the wheels. The mob had sprung up through the asphalt by an evil incantation. The anger, the bloodthirst, the roaring frenzy had come from nowhere. And from nowhere had come the rock that suddenly cut into her temple.

The blow dazed her hardly so much as the abrupt transformation of a street full of oblivious strangers into a riot of enemies.

Her lips were parted in stupefaction; her eyes wide with cloudy wonder. A listless hand went automatically to her forehead, and came down again with an impression of blood on her hair and now on her gloves.

Muriel did not know how the hearts of these people had been wrung with the unending toll of children's lives levied by the traffic of the streets. The ancient Athenians mourned because they had to send each year to Crete seven lads and seven virgins to be devoured by the Minotaur. Among the poor of New York the motor-Minotaurs go bellowing, hunting down and goring their

own prey. More than a hundred children a year are killed in the streets. The horse-drawn vehicles destroy many of these, but the automobiles, being newer and swifter, receive the greater hatred. When they can, the people take their own revenge of the ruthless or luckless drivers, and sometimes it needs quick work and hard for the police to save them from death.

Muriel's chauffeur, Jacques Parny (whom her father had brought over from France with the car he had bought there), had the unsurpassed fearlessness of the Frenchman of our day. And, being French, he was used to the sudden formation of mobs. But he was handicapped now.

The moment's delay while he waited for Muriel's consent to escape had filled the street with people. Ahead and behind wagons of all sorts had paused, cutting off advance or retreat. The flying splinters of glass from the shattered wind-shield slashed him about the face and hands. But he stood up in front of his young mistress to protect her as best he could. And he howled at the howling crowd. His eloquence was limited. His English was small, and his enemies could not understand his French. But Muriel could; and he was afraid to use the expressions that came first to mind.

Still he sheltered her and jabbered and gesticulated till a large boy named Tomsy O'Kim climbed on the footboard back of him and broke a cat-bat over his head. Then Parny collapsed across his steering-wheel.

A loyal servant deserves a loyal master, and Muriel, finding her chauffeur struck down, felt her regret change to wrath. She stood up in her turn to shelter Jacques Parny and she was like a young hawk for ferocity, glaring defiance while the red drops trickled down her cheek. Then she saw across the heads and the waving sedge of arms and fists a little group centered round the victim of the collision.

Those in whom mercy is more instant than wrath had gathered there. Muriel saw the face of the child, all the

whiter for the streaks of dirt. She forgot her anger and her danger in a swift remorse for what she had not caused. She fell to wringing her hands and ineptly maundering:

"Oh, isn't it pitiful! Oh, I'm so sorry! I'm so sorry! Oh, isn't it pitiful!"

There is nothing harder than to attack one who does not resist or protest or run. And Muriel was young and pretty, and fortunately no policeman appeared, for in the heart of the Gas-house District a policeman to fight adds the further zest of an old feud.

The boy with the splintered bat could not strike her. The ferocious women crowding against the wheels ceased shouting of murrains and murder-mobiles. They began to mumble one to another:

"It's not her fahlt, annyhow." "She never done it of her own." "It's hurted she is, too." "Only a gerl and meant no harm." "It's the cheffure's doin's, not hers." "Thim boys is ahl the toime joompin' under the wheels." "There's no keepin' them ahf the streets whatever." "They do be leppin' into throuble the day through."

Muriel had not noted that the storm had died out of the surf. But she saw that her victim was beginning to move, to roll his head in pain. She felt that she must go to him.

She opened the door of the car and dropped to the ground. She might have been in the lobby at the opera from the way she repeated her polite "Pardon me" and "May I pass, please?"

The crowd melted aside like water whist with wonder, then poured after in her wake. She made to the boy's side and gently persuaded his body from the awkward hands about him.

She set one knee on the foul pavement and leaned him against her other knee, and, producing a ridiculously fine and tiny handkerchief, moistened it at her lips and tried to cleanse that ancient little face of its immemorial dirt.

She kept saying:

"It's too bad, it's just too bad," and then, "Couldn't some one get me some water, please?"

There was a panic of obedience. Tomsy O'Kim ran and snatched a tin pail of beer from a little girl who was taking it home to her despondent parents. He was well scratched and kicked in the shins, but he gave the young Amazon a back-handed swipe against a hydrant and she pursued him no farther. Tomsy darted into a small deserted "French laundry," whose Irish laundresses were out with the mob. He emptied the pail into himself, filled it with water at a faucet, and ran off, leaving the faucet gushing.

He was the first to arrive. A moment later Muriel was surrounded by all manner of water-carriers with all manner of vessels, mugs, pitchers, pails, hats, schooners. There was even one basket of water.

She soused her handkerchief in Tomsy's pail and mopped the little face well. It seemed to come out of a shadow into the sun. It was right white under the protecting layer of earth.

Muriel had learned what to do in many an accident, for the rich adventure much peril and encounter much injury. She had been thrown from horses, and her friends had been tossed into unconsciousness times unnumbered from saddles and traps and runabouts. And there had been mishaps on her father's country place. She had helped Italian road-builders when they were knocked over by fragments of rock from dynamite blasts. She had helped the sailors on her father's yacht when they fell down a hatchway or were hurt in the engine-room.

She had acquired a knack for first aid and the stomach of self-control. But she was a little sick now because she felt to blame, and because her victim was so grotesque. Nature had been harsh with him before she came along to batter him to sleep.

As she huddled the body in her arm, and swabbed the soiled wounds, she asked:

"Who is he? Where's his poor mother?"

Tomsy O'Kim answered her:

"Hanigan his name is, lady—Happy Hanigan we call um. He don't belong round here. He's a newsy from down-town."

The victim immediately lost prestige and sympathy from the crowd. What right had he for to be getting hurted in their street? And making the nice girleen get her pretty clothes that dirted up?

Finally Happy Hanigan opened his little eyes and screwed them about in angry wonder. He could not see Muriel's downcast face, for the sun was in his eyes. He blinked and wriggled and then he opened his enormous mouth to say:

"Whatahell's a matter, huh?"

His language was abominably offensive to the ladies in the circle. Strangely enough, Muriel hugged him and smiled and laughed a little. She was glad to have him back on any terms. Happy winced at the pressure and growled:

"Lea' me loose, dammit."

One of the spectators not long on this side of the Irish pond protested: "Take shame to you for such worruds to her honor."

"Don't scold him," said Muriel, and bent over to protect him from blame. Her face made a shadow now, and he could see her. The sunlight crinkled through her hair in a halo. He saw that she was beautiful, and now at last his big mouth wound into the famous grin that had won him his title of nobility.

"Cheese!" he sighed. "Who's de swell dame dat's noissin' me now? I guess I must 'a' croaked and it's a angel—a red-headed angel."

Muriel stamped a hasty kiss on a clean spot she had achieved and lifted him to his feet. He groaned anew now and his legs dangled so crookedly that she set him down again. She turned giddy with the dread that she had broken his poor bones.

"I must get you to the hospital." she said. "Where's the nearest one?"

Happy fought her arms loose and roared:

"Nah, yuh dahn't! Yuh dahn't git me to no horse-spital."

Muriel stared at him. She had not realized that the poor are a little less fond of the surgeon's knives than the rich. It is only natural that they should receive less courtesy, since they are less courteous and more afraid and resistant; they come in crowds; time is money; anesthetics are too expensive to be lavished, and the most eminent physicians are giving their services for nothing but love of humanity and their own craft. Like most other donations, theirs are greeted with suspicion and resentment.

Muriel tried to convince the boy that it was for his own good, but she was not old enough to realize that the poorest of all recommendations is to say that a thing is for one's own good.

Meanwhile at last a policeman was darting that way. Sauntering along Second Avenue, he had observed the swarm in the side-street and had made for it forthwith.

He had no knowledge of what he should find there. But his place was in the thick of it. He treated the crowd with absolute impartiality of violence toward all ages and both sexes. He swept them aside with both hands and came rather swimming than running. He was cruelly disappointed to find nothing more exciting than a newsboy bumped by an automobile. He knew Happy at a glance. He had chased him dozens of times, called him names, and been called names by him from a distance. On occasions he had arrested Happy for playing in the streets, a necessary diversion necessarily made a crime for the children's own sake.

Now Officer McGlashan found Happy leaning on a young woman suspiciously well dressed. It was suspicious for a young woman to be too well dressed along

here. Besides, by this time Muriel's frock was so flecked and her hair so disordered and her face so unlike itself that McGlashan's first thought of her was based on experience and observation. He assumed that she was a wrong one who had wandered in her cups and fallen into a battle. It was not his fault if such things happened so often that he grew to expect them. He began with his usual formula:

"Well, well, well! What's the matter now? What's the matter heer?" He laid his hand on Muriel's shoulder not altogether without pity, not altogether without contempt. Muriel looked down at his hand with such surprise that he took it away quickly. Her voice and her language surprised him further.

"My car ran into this poor child, officer, and I'm ever so sorry. I can never forgive myself. I was about to take him to the nearest hospital. Perhaps you could direct me."

Her dialect was four avenues higher than he expected. He could only sputter with a last flare of dying superiority:

"And who's you, that's goin' to do so much?"

"I'm Miss Schuyler."

"Miss Schuyler is it? And where might you live?"

He whipped out his note-book to record the incident in his log of the street. When Muriel gave him the number, his pencil and his jaw both dropped.

"That would be Jacob Schuyler's house. You're no dahter of Jacob Schuyler?"

If he had asked her was she the daughter of King Jarge of England he could not have been more amazed when she nodded yes. From the equally astounded circle came a sigh of awe, and one reverent:

"My Gawd!"

Some of the women immediately began to take note of the cut of her suit. It was so simple that the design could easily be imitated, if not the fabric. Even Happy felt the eminence of the situation. He made to withdraw from

the arm that nestled him under false pretenses, but Muriel clutched him tighter, and said:

"What are we to do with this poor child?"

Officer McGlashan glanced at her and accepted the flattering "we."

"Well, I suppo-ose we might—at leasht we'd betther—" He looked at Happy. He was more used to talking to the likes of him. He stormed: "And for you, you limb! What were you up to that you're blunderin' into people's cairs?"

Happy was about to explain that he was merely playing cat, but he remembered in the nick of time that playing cat was a misdemeanor, and he answered:

"'Ain't I got a right to cross the street?"

"Nah, you 'ain't got a right to cross the street!" thundered McGlashan. "This ain't even your street. You'd best be lightin' out o' this. And don't let me see you round heer anny more or I'll fan you hairder than the cair did."

Happy made a meek effort to scramble to his feet and do his usual vanishing trick, but his legs wavered, and Muriel gathered him in again.

"Dont' be cross with him; he's terribly hurt!"

From the safe niche of her embrace Happy leered at the policeman, and said, "Yah!"

Then the murmurous crowd heard the familiar hurried knell of the ambulance. An alley opened magically and a Bellevue Hospital motor rolled up. Some one had taken pride in summoning it. From its end gate dropped a young interne in a white suit.

Muriel noted first his immaculateness, and envied it and admired it. It is the quality, some say, that women like first in a man.

CHAPTER IX

THE surgeon noted first the abrasion on Muriel's forehead. He put his hand out toward it. She winced away and moved Happy toward him, smiling.

"This is the patient, doctor."

Clinton Worthing, M.D., had commenced doctor so recently that he still thrilled to the title—and what nobler title is there? He was young enough—and old enough—to be more interested in pretty girls than in crippled boys. But he obeyed Muriel's behest, and his fingers went like ten scouts over the bruises on Happy's head. Happy's pride hurt almost more than his contusions.

The surgeon opened his hand-bag, a compact little dispensary in itself, and whisked forth cotton swabs, sterile bandages, and adhesive plasters. His hands shuttled back and forth with the deft speed of a woman crocheting.

Officer McGlashan did the honors: "Docther, this is Miss Schuyler—old Jake Schuyler's dahter, you knaw."

The doctor threw her a hasty glance as his fingers went on weaving the bandage. He grinned, assuming that the policeman was joking. Next to a reporter, an ambulance doctor has fewer illusions than any one else in the world.

Muriel bent over him anxiously as he bandaged a scraped wrist. She murmured, "I—I'm afraid one of his legs is broken."

The doctor shook his head: "If it had been he'd have let me know soon enough."

"But it's all—all— It's not straight," Muriel persisted, as tactfully as she could.

The doctor lifted Happy to his feet and a glance led her to believe that what she had thought to be a fracture was a congenital malformation. She said:

"I knew a little girl who had that, and they brought over a great European specialist for her and cured her. Why didn't this boy's parents—"

"This boy's parents are not importing specialists, I'm afraid. They come rather high, you know."

"But I should think they could save up enough or borrow enough for as important a thing as that."

The doctor smiled again with a pleasant sort of pity. "The very poor can neither save nor borrow."

"Isn't there any place where it could be done?"

"There's the Orthopædic Hospital, where they'd do it for nothing."

"Then why in Heaven's name haven't they taken him there?"

"You don't know much about the poor, do you? They get so tired and so dejected they don't want to do anything but rest." He spoke to Happy, whose grided skin he was sterilizing and bandaging: "Did your people ever take you to a hospital?"

Happy smiled: "Me mudder done it once and a big guy dere wanted to harness me up like I was a horse and wagon; but I says, 'Nix on de rough stuff, doc. Me bones is me own and I'll keep what I got. I git round, don't I? And I sell as many papes as most of dese guys. Me mudder needs de coin I toin in.'"

Muriel said, "Wouldn't you be willing to take a little vacation now and get yourself all straightened out and—"

Happy pushed the suggestion aside with the flat of his palm and a phrase of simple dignity:

"Nuttin' doin', lady."

Muriel shook her head and the doctor smiled at her. He knew the people.

When he had finished a cursory treatment of Happy he said:

"Now, young man, hop into the 'bus and we'll give you a lift to Bellevue."

"Not on your life!" said Happy. "You'll not take me to no Bellavoo."

"But you'll need a little rest. You've had more of a shock than you realize yet."

"Shock your grandmudder. I'll take me rest at home."

"Then we'll send you home."

"Not in one of dem amblanshes wit' a bell on it. It would t'row me mudder into a fit did she hear it."

"Then I can take you home in my car," Muriel suggested, and Happy graciously consented.

"Oh, all right."

The doctor rose to his feet and put his hand out again toward Muriel:

"I'll have a look at that forehead now," he said.

Again she retreated: "Would you mind seeing to my chauffeur first? I'm afraid he's in trouble."

She led the way through the yielding crowd. Jacques Parny was sitting up now, but clinging to the wheel as if the pavement were reeling under him. The blood was chugging like another engine in his head, where a welt was growing faster than a mushroom.

When he saw Muriel returning he hastened to descend and open the door for her. But he had to cling to it dizzily.

Officer McGlashan exclaimed, "Who done that to you?"

"I do not know," said Jacques.

The crowd knew, but did not tell. Young Tomsy O'Kim, however, seemed to lose interest in the affair; at least he turned and sauntered to the corner of the street, then broke into a run.

The surgeon made sure that Parny's skull was not fractured, and proceded to examine the scalp. His strong hands were defter than a French dressmaker's as his peculiar scissors snipped off the clotted curls, to Parny's bitter regret. With delicate taps of cotton

pledgets he cleared away the blood and disclosed the clean furrow in the welt. Muriel was fascinated instead of sickened by the exquisite speed, and she murmured:

"What a glorious thing to be able to help people in pain!"

"Think so?" he mumbled.

"There's no other knowledge worth as much as that."

"Think not?" he said, with a little less brusqueness as he fixed a bandage on the broken scalp.

"And now it's your turn."

"Oh, I'm all right," she murmured.

"Sit down," he said, pointing to the running-board.

She sat down. She had not realized how weak her knees were till she relieved them of their responsibilities. She felt pretty miserable and forlorn. And she was glad to have the expert hands of a doctor grooming her temple.

It was strange to think of herself there in the middle of the street, that street, surrounded by such a crowd, with an ambulance surgeon mending her wound. The crowd was roaring as gentle as a sucking-dove now. The fierce housewives were conferring about her: "It's the sweet t'thing she is." "And goin' for to bring Happy home in the grand ottymobyl." "A proud day for Mrs. Hanigan that her son's brought back in the like of that."

While the surgeon was at work he had not failed to observe that the door of the car was marked with the initials J. S. They were small letters, but they carried a big message.

Dr. Worthing could not have been human and failed to experience a certain added interest in so expensive a patient met in so cheap a street.

He was not exactly surprised to find that her skin was not of gold-leaf, yet he could hardly convince himself that a girl could live in the sun of such luxury and be so modestly clad, so simple of manner, so pathetically pretty.

Muriel was even more thrilled than the surgeon was.

He had come from the mob like a young hero out of a cloud. He had amazed her with his technic and his business-like philanthropy. He bossed her about a bit, too; gave her things to hold, and told her to sit down.

Muriel was just arriving at her hour for liking to be bossed. She was surprised to find herself almost delighting in her submissiveness; it was a novelty indeed for one who had bossed everybody else—servants, parents, chums, and attendant squires.

Her buoyant health had rarely placed her in a doctor's power. And never had the doctor been anything but old and plain. This young knight ambulant, with his lancet at rest, came to her in a suit of white armor. She trembled with delicious dread at his proximity. His ministrations were not unlike caresses, and when he put aside her hair and bathed the little wound on her brow she blushed with pretty shame. She was amazed to feel so poignantly the tactile fire of his finger-tips, and cast down her eyes in a curious distress.

And he caught fire from her. He was awkward, though he wished to be supremely dextrous. He was not so swift, either, at his task, though this was not entirely unintentional. When he was about to touch her forehead with the tincture she drew away, protesting:

"It will stain."

"It's the best sterilizer there is," he answered, "and your hair will cover it. They're nearly the same color," he laughed, brokenly, holding the phial under her eyes.

"Iodine! Thanks!" she gasped, indignantly.

"It's a beautiful color in the light," he explained, but she would not look. She wanted to be more indignant than she was, at his premature informality. He realized his own impetuosity at the same moment, gulped, "I beg your pardon!" and glared at the understanding mob ferociously.

When he had cleansed and sealed the unimportant laceration of her important forehead his assurance that

she must be made of delicate fiber was revealed in his anxiety.

"You'd better be getting to your home, hadn't you?"

"Not till the poor boy is safe in his."

"Where does he live?"

"I don't know. Where do you live—Mr. Hanigan?"

Happy had swelled up like a heated balloon at the prospect of the ride home; the "Mr." almost exploded him. He had to be asked twice where he lived before he could answer:

"Batavia Street."

"Is it far?"

"Not in one o' dem t'ings."

"Then we'd better be starting. Do I look fit to be seen?"

Dr. Worthing was tempted to cry, "Fit to be seen in heaven!" but he thought better of it. Muriel set to dusting her skirts, and she drew a lock of hair over her battle-scar.

"How's that?" she laughed, and regretted again her surprising friendliness with this stranger.

He dared not tell her how it was.

"Come on, Mr. Hanigan," Muriel cried, and with the aid of the surgeon helped the boy to a seat in the tonneau. His shapeless awkwardness wrenched her heart again. It was intolerable that he should hobble so helplessly all his days. She knitted her brows as she put out her hand to the surgeon:

"Thank you ever so much, Dr.—Dr.—"

"Worthing—Clinton Worthing."

"Dr. Worthing," she finished, and reclaimed her hand. She bowed to the beaming McGlashan.

"Thank you, officer. Good-by." She bowed to the glowing crowd. "Thank you, everybody."

As she was about to get in and join Happy (who was trying to look as if he owned the car and already warning his late fellows to gittahell offen dat step and where did

dey tink dey was) Muriel beckoned the doctor and spoke to him in a low voice:

"It seems inhuman to let the poor boy go on through life such a cripple. There ought to be some way to get him cured."

"The city would do what it could for him, but it's long and painful and costly."

"I'd be so glad to pay anything it might cost."

"That would help, of course."

She enraptured him by saying: "Could you fix him up at your hospital? It would be nice to have him in charge of one who—who—"

She didn't know just what should follow that "who."

He relieved her: "We couldn't treat him at Bellevue, but there are other hospitals."

"How could I find out the best place and get him there? I'm so ignorant."

"I could arrange it for you."

"Oh, if you only would I'd be so grateful!"

"It would be a pleasure, I'm sure."

"How soon could you look it up and let me know?"

He could have told her offhand, but he could not resist the temptation of another meeting. So he said:

"Some time to-day. I'll be off duty in the late afternoon."

"Oh, will you? You could telephone me—or it might be better to talk it over. You couldn't come up to the house, could you?"

"Why, yes, I could. Yes, certainly—"

"That would be splendid. You could have tea with me, perhaps."

He could only nod and try to keep from swallowing the lump of sugar in his throat.

"Fine!" she cried. "At about half past four or five?"

He bowed. The asphalt was oscillating under him. He could hardly remember his dignity.

To Muriel he should have been merely a very kind and

very nice young man who would be useful in getting something done that she wanted done. She had always been surrounded by servants, and she was always gracious and grateful to them. She had acquired a habit of setting other people to work, not because she was lazy, but because she was busy. The rich have a hundred hands to reach for things and a hundred feet to run errands.

Muriel tried to tell herself that she had no more idea of kindling a flame in the young surgeon's heart than of encouraging every young fellow she asked to run and get her tennis-racquet. She wanted to straighten out Happy Hanigan, and she would use the time, money, and skill of anybody that could help her.

Miss Schuyler said, haughtily: "Thank you a thousand times. At half past four then! Good-by." But the girl Muriel beamed on him through soft eyes like a Southern beauty rewarding a serenader beneath her lattices.

Miss Schuyler hopped into the car and slammed the door after her. She lavished on Happy the kindliest smile in her repertoire. But Muriel flung back one swift sweet glance that deranged its victim and accomplished a compound fracture of his peace of mind.

The young surgeon gazed after her and felt as lonely in the crowd as if he were Robinson Crusoe cast ashore. He sighed to himself: "If only she were a trained nurse! Or, better yet, if only I were a millionaire!"

CHAPTER X

JACQUES PARNY perked an inquiring ear for directions. Muriel passed the query to Happy.

"Where was it you said you lived, my dear?"

"Batavia Street, darlin'," said Happy, impudent with glory.

Muriel asked Jacques if he knew Batavia Street. He did not. Happy was contemptuous of such ignorance.

"Dem dagos don't know nuttin'. Does he know where Cherry Street is, den?"

"Chérie Strit," said Jacques. "I do not know her also."

Happy turned away in despair. "Would he know Brooklyn Bridge if he run into it?"

Jacques answered, "Ah yes, those Brookleen Breedge, I know him."

"Den move on wit' your baby-carrage. It's right near him," said Happy, winking at Muriel.

When the baby-carriage moved on, the boys and girls began to shriek at Happy, as if a fiery chariot were translating him. They ran alongside, dancing and shouting, and several of them seemed determined to earn themselves rides by the same disaster that had proved so fortunate for him.

Muriel's life had hitherto revolved in a glittering circle. Now it was flying off at a tangent. That journey was like a condensed trip to foreign lands, beginning with a more or less Irish region, passing through Hungary, Bohemia, Poland, Russia, Roumania, Greece, and Japan.

They left behind the mysterious region where the enormous gas-tanks loomed like floating turrets of some grotesque architecture, and glided into a region where the people were foreign, the names on the sign-boards and the wares they offered foreign, and the advertisements in the Hebrew character.

The streets narrowed. On the steps old patriarchs, bearded and skull-capped, yet with very modern sleeve-supporters, sat in venerable reveries. On the sidewalks the women and children were disposed as informally as if in their own rooms. And in the streets, too, the children waddled about at ease.

Now and then Parny must check the car sharply while a large-eyed babe sucked its thumb in the face of peril, till its mother ran out from among the shouting neighbors and lugged it ashore, glaring resentfully at the invaders, but yanking the child no less resentfully.

There were evidences enough of the lack of riches in the overcrowding, the costumes, the things they were buying and selling, and the bedding bulging from the windows. Yet cheek by jowl with the sardine-can tenements sat every here and there some splendid building devoted to happiness or other form of welfare—a normal training-institute, a hospital, a children's aid society, a bank, a school.

Parks were frequent here, and in the open spaces children were playing games they had had to be taught. Muriel had heard something of these breathing-spaces, and remembered reading that many of them replaced plague-sores of corruption. When Mulberry Bend and Corlears Hook had resisted the best the police, the preachers, and the health officers could do in palliation, some genius had proposed their complete elision. Poultices, caustics, and antiseptics having failed, an operation was suggested. The buildings were bought, razed, and their spaces united into parks.

Muriel thought that this was about the decentest and

happiest thing in human history. Good people had passed through here. Big hearts had taken thought for the poor, busied themselves as their brothers' keepers. These buildings, these parks were like feathers fallen from angels' wings—anonymous angels, and rather bound toward heaven than come from there. Yet angelic somehow.

Muriel felt again that the weak and the luckless were in careful hands. She knew that her father and mother were always giving, giving, giving. First she felt relieved of responsibility. Then she felt an awakening to it. Why should she leave these tasks to others? If everybody waited for somebody else, nobody would get anything done for anybody. She must at least take from her parents their charitable labors.

Her heart seemed to cry out to this opportunity:

"Let me in. I want to be useful as that nice Dr. Worthing is useful. I have a right to be useful. I am young and husky and I have lots of money—or my father has—and he always gives me what I want. Let me in!"

She resolved to plunge at once into the crusade. Youth-like she was sure that she could accomplish marvels. She only hoped that she had not reached the scene too late, like a volunteer fireman who arrives after the fire is out. She was almost afraid that there would be no misery left to her to relieve!

She need not have worried had she known that the ferocious summer of 1913 was to be followed by a fiercer winter of almost unequaled length and bitterness, and that the hard times would throw upon the one town some three hundred and fifty thousand men who could get no work to do; and that after that there was yet far worse to come another year.

As she sat panting thirstily and beaming with enthusiasm for a career of glorious charity, Happy Hanigan was sitting as high as he could, frowning majestically, and trying to assume an automobile face. The nearest he could come to it was the look the judges wore in the Children's

Court when they tried to glare more fiercely than they felt.

Suddenly along the entire length of his mouth there were signs of a skirmish between laughter and severity. Muriel smiled and asked him what was troubling him. That detonated his laughter and he snickered:

"Cheese, but I'm hopin' me mudder 'll be at de windy so 's 't she'll see me roll up in de band-wagon."

It was rather tactless of Muriel to ask, "Is this your first ride in a band-wagon?"

"Oh no," sighed Happy, grandiosely, "I ride up-town in a newspaper-truck now an' den, and I got a friend drives a brewery-truck, an' o' course I sneak on behind of a taxicab now and den. Dis is me foist spin in a open-faced truck, dough. Oh, I've rode in artemobiles a lot—not countin' our own horse an' wagon, o' course."

Muriel exposed again a strange indelicacy of surprise. She was snob enough to feel Mr. Hanigan's rise in the social scale. One cannot possess a horse and wagon and be entirely negligible. She asked with more respect, "Oh, you own a horse, do you?"

"Sure we own a horse. Ain't me fadder a truckman?"

"Really?"

"Sure he is. He's got a license and all."

"And what does he—er—truck?"

"Oh, junk, and rags, and ice-cream, and people's foiniture when dey git t'run out for de rent. Me fadder trucks lots o' t'ings."

Muriel had learned at receptions and teas to work any topic of conversation for all it was worth; she went on, briskly:

"And is your horse a strong horse?"

"Well, he's not what you'd call a draft-horse. You couldn't do no heavy dray work wit' him. He's cut kind o' clost to de bone, and he wears his ribs on de outside. But he does what he kin, Whiskers does."

"Whiskers?"

"Dat's his name."

"Rather odd name, isn't it?"

"Wait till you see his feet. All four of 'em could use a haircut. And he's got a lower lip like a billy-goat."

When they had run down the ladder of numeral-named streets they came into the region of named streets. But the names conveyed nothing more to Muriel.

There are those who object to the American custom of numbering streets: they find it offensive to esthetics, however convenient. They say that numbers are meaningless and cannot acquire tradition, as if to those who know Fifth Avenue it is not as different from Sixth as Piccadilly from Whitechapel Road. Those names mean nothing, either, till you know what they mean. But to New-Yorkers, East Thirteenth Street or West Twenty-eighth has as much connotation as Wall or Delancey. To the stranger, Forty-second Street and Fifty-ninth Street may suggest nothing, but neither does East Broadway, which Happy pointed to as "de Fi'th Avenyeh of de East Side."

He kept calling to the bewildered Parny: "To de right," "Toin to de lef'," "Say, where you goin'!" "Now to de right." "Whyn't you keep on straight till I tell you?"

Parny's dignity was ruffled and he was crimson behind the ears, but Muriel was amused. If Happy went to heaven he would call St. Peter "de old janitor wit' de white fringe."

Muriel began to suspect that Happy was taking them out of the way for the sake of the ride. And he was. But eventually they came to the region where an arc of the first of the big city bridges soars above the roofs and where the white height of the Municipal Building thrusts icy pinnacles up and up into the sky.

Muriel found Batavia Street a narrow alley a few hundred feet long. It reminded her of London in its air of being mislaid, its brevity, and its gloomy antiquity. Yet

it was hard to believe that the first home of the first President of the United States was within a stone's-throw of this place.

There was barely room for Parny to squeeze his big car between the sidewalks, and he was unable to pass the first obstruction, a ramshackle wagon on splay wheels. Attached to it was a horse that stood bias to the street and leaned upon its rope-mended harness in shameless decrepitude. The wagon belonged in the kindling-pile and the horse was ready for the boneyard.

Parny squawked his horn to warn the animal aside, but he did not budge.

"He's deef," said Happy, who was in no hurry to get down from his leathern throne.

Muriel asked, "Is that—that horse—yours?"

"That's Whiskers," said Happy. "Can't you see?"

The reasons for the title were abundantly evident on fetlock and chin.

On the side of the wagon a legend had been painted by home talent in unconscious cryptogram:

pAtRickhANig
AN tRuckM
ANAnd BAggAgdƎ
LivƎRd-LiCƎns No.
8372

Muriel was puzzling over the rebus when Happy seized her arm and murmured:

"Look, dere's me mudder. See? In de top windy! She hoid de honker, but she 'ain't sor me yet." He called aloud: "Hay, ma, here I am! It's me!" Again he gripped Muriel's wincing arm. "She sees me! Yep, it's me, ma! She's pipin' you off now. She t'inks you're me new wife. Cheese, she's been cryin'. I better git to her."

Muriel looked up the dark wall to a top window where

a head hung over a sill as if it had been cut off. She could make out little except the air of age and sorrow before she had to turn to Happy.

He was making haste to get down, but his zeal aroused slumbering bruises and he yowled and collapsed into the arms of Muriel. She let him down into the hands of Parny, who did not relish the ungainly burden. He started to carry Happy to his door, only to be rewarded with pummelings and kicks:

"Drop me, dammit, me mudder 'll t'ink I'm dead."

Parny lowered him at once and he waved and smiled up to his mudder. But there was melancholy reassurance at best in his shambling gait, and Muriel felt tears in her soul.

In Batavia Street the tenements are not very high and they have little wooden stoops set sidewise. It wrung Muriel's heart to see Happy negotiate the problem. She followed to help him. And inside the building the stairs were narrow and dark. She thought she would shriek at his boggling deliberateness, but he would not accept her aid.

His mother came running down to meet him and her aid he accepted, also her caresses and kisses and her pet names and her anxiety. He was telling her all about everything while he panted up the stairs, and she was interspersing his narrative with exclamations of pious terror, as if the danger were to come instead of past.

Like the good fervent soul she was she appealed to holy names with every breath. It was, "Ah, the Lord love ye, darlin'!" "Oh, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and how was it you weren't killed?" and, "Oh, merciful hour! Thank God for all things!"

Muriel was forgotten for the moment and was tempted to retreat, but Happy called down to her to come up and meet his mother. Muriel climbed the rickety boards as meekly and breathlessly as many an aspirant for recognition had climbed the famous marble stairway in her

father's home—the stairway whose ascension was considered so definitely a route to the social seventh heaven that it was known as "Jacob's Ladder."

Muriel's mother had stood for years at the top of Jacob's Ladder and she was regarded as a fierce old gorgon by those curious people who try to make friends with the great not for the sake of the human friendship, but for the sake of the diploma it gives. To Muriel, however, her mother had been only and altogether what a mother is and should be. Born on the peak, Muriel could not understand the fierce anxiety of the climbers. But now she understood it by a sort of inverted reflection; she was climbing toward the antipodal height of poverty. She was the intruder, the aspirant, hoping that Mrs. Hanigan would accept her service and afraid that she might resent it as an impudence.

And Happy, who made the presentation, left no doubt by his manner that it was Muriel who was receiving rather than giving the honor of the occasion.

His formula of introduction was simple:

"Ma, shake hands wit' Miss Schuyler. She's so stuck on me shape she follered me home."

Mrs. Hanigan was in a difficult position. As a mother it was her duty to revile Muriel for the damage done to her son; also it was her duty to thank her for her subsequent courtesy. Hospitality urged her to ignore the former duty and do the latter. She put into Muriel's stout young fingers her toil-weary, time-worn little old hand and said:

"Good marnin', and God save you. It's kind you were to the boy."

"I wasn't very kind to him," said Muriel, "but I want to be."

But Mrs. Hanigan felt called upon to apologize for the neighborhood before she took up any new business:

"You mustn't be mindin' the looks of things. This street is gone that bad it 'd take the heart out of you.

But when first we came over this was as grand a neighborhood as you'd be lookin' for. Grand people here, too. Now and again there'd be a bit of throuble on Cherry Street, but the police was ahlways interferin', and smahl wondher they got paid up. At last thim Eyetalians begin to pour in, and us Irish hates garlic as the devil hates holy wather. We was always m'aning to move, but the one thing and another previnted. We done our best to show the Eyetalians they wasn't wahnted. Me own man and others would push chimneys off the roofs onto them, but then they'd move in at night. There was no stoppin' 'em, so at last we had to get used to 'em.

"Thin the Yiddishers come along and squeeged out the Eyetalians, and we was worse off nor befoor; and now it's the Greeks have drove out the Yiddishers. And it's past apologizin' for. There's nobody here now but new Albanians and a few of us old families, Irish, Jewish, and Dago, that couldn't somehow get away. But for why am I holdin' you out in the hahl? Come in, dear."

She opened the door, motioned Muriel within, wiped off a chair with her sleeve, invited Muriel to sit down, and stood meekly before her, with her head tilted wistfully to one side and one hand at her throat holding her waist together.

Muriel prepared to deliver her petition and coughed once or twice. Then she noted that Happy had toddled to his cot in the kitchen and fallen asleep as soon as he spread his poor bones across it. The shock had begun to show the drain on his strength.

Muriel beckoned Mrs. Hanigan into the hall for a secret conference on the matter of rectifying Happy's frame. They tiptoed out, and Muriel, leaning against the banister, stated her case with apologies for her interference.

Mrs. Hanigan stared at her with the hungry gratitude of a famine-sufferer to a distributer of bread. The tears ran to her eyes and scattered down her infinitely wrinkled skin like spilled shot.

It was a divine boon Muriel offered her. In the mystic lottery of birth she had drawn a crippled child, whose deformities had grown with him, a lifelong reproach and protest to his parents.

And now from the heavens a saint had arrived promising a divine miracle by way of the science and surgery of to-day which are the clay and spittle on the eyes of the blind, the "Arise, take up thy bed and walk" of the halt.

Mrs. Hanigan accepted with gratitude and a promise of countless prayers for Muriel's welfare. She promised to break the news to Happy and to compel him to undergo the ordeal.

Then Muriel put out her hand in farewell and turned to descend the stairs. Mrs. Hanigan would have been less surprised if she had unfolded wings and soared away through the skylight.

As Muriel was listening to the endless reiteration of Mrs. Hanigan's gratitude and trying to get her hand back without brusquerie, she began to take cognizance of a moaning. She had heard it all the while, but it had not quite forced its way into her main current of thought.

Now she realized that it was not a freak of the wind, but the wailing of women in great sorrow. She asked Mrs. Hanigan what it might be.

"It's them poor Wops on the flure beneat'th," said Mrs. Hanigan. "Their name is Angelilly, and I take shame to meself for complainin' when I think of what's put on thim. My boy Michael is twishted, but I have him home. Their boy has been stolen on thim by the Black Hand. They have money where we have none, but they haven't enough for to pay what 'll bring back their boy. They're near destroyed with trouble. God sinds the childher to the poor for a blessin', but the Black Boy turns them into a sorrow."

Muriel's first thought was an appeal to the law.

"Their child stolen!" she gasped. "Why don't they appeal to the police?"

Mrs. Hanigan smiled dismally: "The police is it? And get their boy killed for them. Sure they're afraid to be heard cryin' out loud. The poor mother—me heart bleeds for her—she's not so bad—for a Dago—kind and quite but only for when she's wailin'."

Muriel pondered. "I wonder if I could be of help?"

Mrs. Hanigan was instantly alarmed: "You'd best be keepin' out of that, honey. Thim Black Hand Ginneys is the terrible ones. They're like snakes in the dark. They'd kill a Christian as soon as an Eyetalian if you crossed their path."

Muriel was learning something of the modern demonology of the present-day poor: the automobiles, the Mafia, the hospitals. Danger and bad luck assailed the poor most on the side of their children. The rich man's young are perishable freight enough, but the little poor must run endless gantlets of danger.

Muriel promised Mrs. Hanigan to keep away, and got her hand back at last, after Mrs. Hanigan had held it and patted it and laid it against her tear-enriched cheek.

Then Muriel hurried down the stairs. She was so afraid of the very mention of the Black Hand that she went along the next hall beneath on tiptoe. As she was passing the fateful door the voice of the woman within broke out in an anguish of impatience at fate:

"*O figlio mio! figliuolo mio!*"

Muriel had spent a winter or two in Italy and learned to like the people. She liked everybody she knew. She felt the human urge impelling her feet to the door. But fear carried her on, though the reiterated wail went through her heart like a thin stiletto.

She moved doggedly down the first few steps of the next stairway, but that mother's call for her son seized her as with a mother's hands, and she paused.

There was the sound of a younger voice comforting the older. Somehow that courage touched her deeplier than the agony, that old glorious watchword of mankind, "'Let us be strong." She heard it here in this tenement, "*Siamo forti, madre mio.*" She wavered, then turned about, mounted the steps, went to the door and tapped softly.

CHAPTER XI

THERE was a silence. She tapped again, then a feeble call:

"*Chi è là?*"

"*Un 'amica,*" she answered.

"*Entri!*"

Muriel pushed the door open timidly and paused, once more a social aspirant in another caste. She had a sense of Italian large eyes further enlarged with wonder.

On a backless chair the woman whose wails had troubled the building sat crouched, tearing her hair and clawing her cheeks. She was only thirty, but she was already a grandmother. She looked up through her claws now and stared through streaming eyes at Muriel. Across her lap lay her latest child, an infant exhausted with its unheeded shrieks.

At her side stood her eldest daughter, herself a wife and not yet fifteen. In her left arm she held a naked, chubby *bambella* that stood on her narrow hip and fed noisily at her young breast, as unmindful of grief as the tiny kitten that lay supine on the floor and sparred with the fringe of the red table-cloth.

The wall was spotted with a few Biblical scenes, a comic supplement or two from a Sunday newspaper, and gaudy prints of the Italian king and queen wearing a startled and uncomfortable expression. On an easel was propped a large crayon portrait of a boy. It was one of the horrors that cheap photographers inflict on their more liberal customers. The artist had done his worst, but had not

quite effaced all human semblance, and there was a remnant of childish beauty.

As Muriel faced the gaze of the puzzled women she felt like apologizing for an unpardonable infringement on the privacy of their grief. But she had crossed the Rubicon and she could not retreat. She paused at the door-sill to compose her offer of services in lugubrious Italian.

"*I—o—ho—io ho udi—udito vostro—*" She could not remember the word for "crying."

The elder woman stared dumbly, the younger answered, "You did hear my mawther cry?"

"Yes," Muriel gasped, grateful for the rescue. "I was passing. I heard the sound of weeping. I thought I might help."

The elder mother frowned and tried to grasp Muriel's meaning without understanding her words. She tugged at her daughter's apron and muttered:

"*Che dice?*"

The younger mother translated in an undertone the nature of Muriel's visit. The elder woman answered resentfully. Muriel caught the words "*casa di settlement.*" They took her for a settlement-worker. This, strangely, did not make her welcome. She could not understand why. But she explained with a timid confusion that won their hearts how she had been calling upon Mrs. Hanigan and had learned of their grief and could not go past the door without at least telling them how sorry she was.

Once more the women conferred. Then the girl brought forward a chair and said, "*Favorite di sedere.*"

The social struggler had captured another stronghold.

Even the kitten came over to pretend that Muriel's little shoe was a very big mouse, and she encouraged its scamperings, back-archings, tail-swelling onsets, and panics. The women smiled a little at the kitten's mock heroics. It was about the only thing in the world that could have brought them a smile.

Fortunately for Muriel the sticky baby refused her advances.

Muriel extracted the story of the theft of the child after some difficulty. The mother, Teresa, was incoherent with grief, but the daughter, Gemma, was fluent in English, for all her accent. She said that her father, Angelo Angelillo, was an ambitious man who kept a bakeshop and tried to advance himself with side lines, such as ice and wood and fruit and a few boot-blacking stands. He thought he had no enemies. He had kept clear of the feuds brought over from Italy or compounded here. He made some money, and was glad to give the impression of making more—it was the typical American game of bluff and it helped business.

But it had attracted the attention of the criminals, too. Several times the shop had been robbed, with poor results. Now the boy had been stolen to be held for ransom. Teresa broke in that it was a punishment from Heaven for her husband's wild ambitions—*punizione d' ambiziosagine.*

Gemma told how the boy Filippo was prized. He was all the sons of his father's house, and more precious than all the daughters together. There had been no thought of danger—Filippo had played in the streets or pretended to be a salesman in his father's bakeshop. Sometimes he was allowed to deliver packages—long sticks of bread or cakes. He could be trusted with the bread; sometimes the cakes were nibbled, but nobody minded the marks of his little teeth.

Three days ago he had gone on such an errand. He had not come back—not to dinner, not in the evening. They had all hunted for him, run through the streets, through all the streets, even through the whole long curve of Mulberry Bend and through the park named after the Italian who invented America. They had

searched even through the "Little Italy" of far-away Harlem.

Muriel could picture them running awkwardly, bareheaded, gesticulating, with their hair flying, their eyes wild, breathlessly demanding, demanding.

Gemma brought out a photograph of the boy—the photograph from which the crayon portrait had been made. It showed the usual unusual beauty of Italian children. Filippo might have been one of Donatello's little choristers.

All night he had not come home. All night the father neglected the bakery and ransacked the town, calling, peering, questioning as if in a huge forest.

No bread was made that night; the other bakers were turned loose to hunt. The next day the shop was closed while the search went on. The father had even dared to visit the Morgue; he had telephoned the hospitals. He had been desperate enough to notify the police that the boy was lost. A general alarm was sent out with a description of his white waist, his black little breeches, his brown stockings and shoes, his straw hat, his seventy pounds of weight, his big black eyes, black curls, and red lips. This helped the indifferent police not at all, for New York is the largest Italian city in the world save Naples—larger than Rome or Milan; half a million Italians are scattered through the city. The description of Filippo fitted thousands of little Italian boys. But the Angelilli could not imagine another like their Filippo.

The next day came a terrible letter; it proved that the child had not run away; he had not hated his family or wearied of his home; he had been stolen. Somewhere he was crying for his mother unless he was gagged; he was afraid and hungry; perhaps he was beaten, thrust into some dark cellar—and he was always so afraid of the dark! Gemma brought out the letter, a plain envelope with the address printed on it in pencil. The postmark was Brooklyn. The message was printed in Italian,

which even Muriel could see was misspelled and ungrammatical. She Englished it thus

ANGELO ANGELILLO,—Your boy is in our hands. If you love him you will be glad to pay us five thousand dollars, which we need. If you love the money more than you love your son keep your money and we will send the boy back to you in a box. If you want to see him alive publish in the *Araldo* this line, "Lost: $5,000 reward for Filippo Angelillo" and we will let you know where to put the money. If you tell the police, you will not see the boy again even in a box.

The letter was not signed, except by a rude picture of an open hand in black ink.

Muriel read the letter slowly and put it down as if it were an infernal machine. It chilled her blood with the peculiar cruelty of a crime against a child.

"Did you publish the line in the paper?" she asked.

Gemma shook her head dolefully: "Where shall my fadder find fi' zousan dollari? He has not. He cannot get."

"Did you notify the police?" Muriel asked, miserably.

"No, no! *Giammai!* To tell the police is to keel Filippo. The letter says it. *Eccòlo!* So soon the police hunt for the boy, so soon he die."

"What can you do then?" Muriel faltered, sick at her futility.

"To pray and to cry is all," said Gemma. "*Il mio padre* hunts in Brooklyn to-day. But Brooklyn is beega city. He cannot find Filippo; soch a leetla boy in a so beega city."

The women subsided into a wide-eyed stupor.

Gemma told of other boys who had been stolen, relations of theirs. And men had been killed who were relations of theirs. The famous barrel murder was still unsolved, though eleven lives had been lost. The one thing unfailing was the failure of the police, and the

ruination of everything when they blundered into the mystery.

Muriel felt the terror of the subterrene war. It was like a conflict among moles somewhere in the earth.

There was a tap at the door. Hallard walked in. He assumed that Muriel was from one of the settlement houses, engaged in benefiting these reluctant people with useful but unwelcome advice as to ventilation, the making of beds, the care of children, and true economy. Hallard explained that he had heard of the kidnapping and was assigned by the *Bulletin* to find out the truth. At that time he had not yet moved over to the *Gazette*.

There are various words for devil, but the terrible word "reporter" is the same in all languages. The English invented it, the Americans perfected its powers, and the rest of the world has adopted it.

Gemma did not have to translate the title when she understood, she simply gasped:

"*Uno reporter!*"

Teresa understood, and moaned, "*Tutto è perduto!*"

The very mention of Hallard's errand threw the women into a panic. Their one hope had been to work in secret, to keep even the police from throwing their flash-lamps into the cave. The newspapers would be like sudden search-lights. The kidnappers would scurry for shelter, leaving a dead child in some closet or vacant lot.

Gemma put her baby in her mother's lap and strode toward Hallard with a frenzy of hatred.

"You get outa thees room!" she cried. "If you poob-leesh about our Filippo they keel our leetla boy. See, they say it. And I keel you—me!"

She held the letter out and beat it with the back of her hand. Hallard snatched it and glanced over it before he allowed Gemma to recover it. She would have torn him with her nails, but he caught her hands and tried to calm her:

"Now, now," he said. "Easy does it! *Piano, piano!* The *Bulletin* is your friend—*io amico—comprendete?* You give me a picture of the boy. We publish it. Everybody sees it. Somebody recognizes the boy. We find him right away, and there you are. It's the only thing."

Gemma knew more of the Black Hand than she did of Hallard's theory of government by newspaper and police by publicity. She continued to order him out, flinging back the door and shouting like a fury.

Hallard saw the photograph and picked it up. "Is this the kid?"

Gemma snatched it from his hands.

He smiled. "Oh, all right." He turned to Muriel. "They all look alike. Our artist can fake up a good picture, and we have the police description."

Muriel added her prayers to Gemma's:

"Oh, I beg you not to print anything. They know best. It's their child. It's their right to say whether they shall have the story published."

Hallard grinned. "Well, it's a matter of opinion. We think that sunlight never hurt anything that was worth saving. Anyway, I'm sent to get the story and I've got to obey orders. Did you know the boy?"

"No," said Muriel. "Isn't there any inducement I can offer to persuade you to keep quiet?"

He smiled and shook his head.

Her fingers went to the lock of her hand-bag.

He frowned with his eyebrow and a half, and one-half of his lip sagged; then he began to laugh contemptuously. Her hand fell away from her purse. He stared at her and her pretty helplessness. Then he started, and gasped:

"Say, you're the young Miss Schuyler, aren't you?"

"That has nothing whatever to do with it," she answered with great firmness. "What I want you to do is to keep this out of the papers."

"I'm afraid that's impossible, Miss Schuyler," he said, amused at her dictatorial tone.

She gave up bribery and command and turned to appeal. "Then won't you please tell your editor that you couldn't find out anything? Couldn't you?"

"Would you have a newspaper man tell a fib?" Hallard groaned with a burlesque horror. The armor of his cynicism was impenetrable.

She could not fight past his grin to his heart, if he had any. She sank back into her chair, and muttered, "You beast!" There was something pleasantly naïve in her very insolence. Unselfish anger is always becoming.

Hallard sighed. "If we only printed what we were asked to print, Miss Schuyler, and left out everything we were asked to leave out, there'd be nothing but advertisements and stories about actresses and—society folks. You won't mind if I write a little about finding you here working for these poor people, will you?"

"What!" Muriel exclaimed, sitting up very straight.

"The story about this poor boy is worth only a couple of sticks, but if I can get you into it they'll give me a column or two. We've got a photograph of you, but perhaps you have a later picture you'd rather have us run."

"Why, you unmitigated scoundrel!" Muriel gasped.

Hallard did not wince. He pleaded: "What better publicity could you want than a story of how you came down here into the slums and held out a helping hand to the downtrodden in their distress? I could get a flashlight of you in this room and call it the Angel of the Tenements."

If she had even nibbled at the bait he would have despised her as the dealers in publicity despise the beggars in rags and tags "and some in velvet gowns" who whine and wheedle at the back doors of the newspapers. But Muriel was aghast at the very suggestion.

"You dare to mention my name in your miserable old paper and I'll—I'll—" It was hard to think what she could do, but her wrath was manifest.

"What harm could it do you?" Hallard urged.

"You can't harm me!" she blazed with the haughty presumption of a young empress. "But you can harm these poor souls. I came in here to help them and you want to use me to harm them. They don't want anything printed. And they know best. And they have some rights, even if I haven't. But if you make use of my father's prominence to print a big article about me and injure these poor souls—well, I don't know what I can do, but some day you'll get paid for it. You see!"

Hallard's comment on her fierce tirade was to lift his eyes gratefully and sigh, "Thank God, for once!"

Muriel did not know from what a long experience of the miasms in the marshes of self-seeking and self-concealment this gratitude arose. She supposed that she had failed, since he went to the door. But he paused and said, with much deference in his tone:

"I've got to turn in the story of the boy, Miss Schuyler, because I was sent for it; but I'll keep it down as much as I can. And I'll leave you out of it. It's kind of disloyal to my paper, but it's a luxury to me to be asked to keep a decent action secret."

"My father does hundreds of charitable deeds every year and keeps them secret," Muriel retorted.

"Then they get head-lines in the New Jerusalem *Journal*," said Hallard, pointing up, "and I've no doubt your picture will be there this afternoon. But it won't appear in the New York *Bulletin*. Good-by, Miss Schuyler, and my congratulations to you on your soul."

He puzzled her unsophisticated young mind almost as much as he puzzled the two Italian women who understood his language even less than she did.

But they all took comfort from his smile; and no smile is quite so sweet as that which surprises a cynical face with a flood of benignity.

Teresa began again to babble prayers to the *Madre*

di Dio to spare her boy from torments such as Her boy had endured.

Then came a thumping of feet on the stairway, and the door was flung open by a young Italian man whose clothes and arms and face were white with flour. He carried a letter in his hand, and he was sure that it was from the boy himself. It had come into the shop pinned to a bag of flour brought by a flour merchant who said that he had not seen it before.

All three were so excited that their hands could neither take nor hold the letter. It fell to the floor and was clutched at and dropped again. It fluttered like a butterfly trying to escape. At last Gemma secured it and ripped it open. She cried that it was from Filippo. He had printed it himself.

Into her hand fell a little black curl of hair. She held it out in her palm. The mother seized it, pressed it to her lips and to her breast and talked to it.

Then Gemma read the letter with greedy joy that curdled at once. Her laughter ended in a gnarr of nausea. She dug her fingers into her breast and the paper fell again to the floor while she knelt and, clinging to the mother, chattered insanely.

Muriel hesitatingly picked up the letter and read:

Cara mamma cara babbo io fame e paura.

She could make out the beginning, the child's first cry. "I am hungry and afraid," but what followed in childish dialect and spelling escaped her. Especially the words "*parsell posto.*"

She knelt by the kneeling Gemma and put her arms about both women and their smothered, wailing babes, but they seemed not to know of her existence.

The young baker took the letter from her fingers with a gentle, "*Domando perdona.*" He read and fell to beat-

ing his eyes with his palms. Muriel turned to him for explanation, and he cried:

"Leetla boy says, 'Pleass send money queeck or man says he gona cut me into—into pieces and senda wan piece avery day by—by—*dio mio!*—by post—by parcel post'!"

Muriel felt herself swooning. She kept herself alive only by the necessity of helping these frantic wretches.

Just one hope of rescue occurred to Muriel—to pay the ransom. Somewhere the five thousand dollars must be found.

When she thought of money she thought of her father. She would go to him at once, and make him give it to her. Of course he would. He'd be only too glad to.

Radiant with inspiration, she knelt by the women again and took their swaying bodies in her arms and kissed their cheeks and called through the mist of fear that enveloped them, repeating again and again in English mingled with such Italian as she could improvise:

"Don't cry—*non piangete; piace!—io andare a mio padre.* He will—*il dare mi le cinque mille* dollars; yes, he will—*sì, sì—mio padre* very rich—reech—*ricco uomo, padre mio—il è milionario, sì—sì!* Filippo will come back. I'll get him—*io—io—presto possibile.* Please don't cry! I come back. *A rivederci.* Good-by!"

Her effort to find the words was almost more tormenting than her sorrow. Finally she beat into Gemma's mind the new hope, and Gemma told her mother. Teresa stared at Muriel incredulously, then caught her about the knees, imploring her by her hope of paradise, by the body of God, by the blood of San Gennaro by all things imaginable, to save the *piccolo figliuolo.*

Muriel backed away promising, promising, and Teresa dragged after her on her knees, kissing Muriel's arms and the hem of her skirt till Gemma unfastened her hands and held her while Muriel escaped.

Just one bright fact glinted in the black smoke about her, and that was the glory and beauty and salvation of the wealth her father had been good enough to build up. Many newspapers published heinous attacks on her father, because of his wealth and the way he got it and kept it. Orators under red flags said that he should be pauperized or assassinated; but she felt that wealth was justified, was sanctified by such opportunities as this.

CHAPTER XII

MURIEL hurried down the stairway and met the fretful Parny, who was about to mount in pursuit of her. She silenced his indignant rebukes, and was just stepping into the car when the silence of the shut-in street was broken by a hubbub of voices, a man's shrill protests, gruff shouts, and women's clamor.

Muriel was fatigued with grief. She had seen two tragedies, and they were enough for one day. But it was not for her to select the number or the nature of her experiences. They were not prepared for her. Thousands of other and equally cruel torments were trying human hearts all over the town, all over the nation, all over the world, perhaps all over the universe.

Everywhere—on that day as on this—sorrow was chasing joy from one place and joy was putting grief to flight from another. Whoever walks the city streets or the country lanes or enters any of the houses must keep ears and eyes and heart hermetically sealed and must brood exclusively on his own moods, or he will find that life is hardly more than the everlasting frustration of ever-renewed desires.

Let him who would hoard his money or his sympathy stick close at home, for everywhere he moves abroad he will find empty pockets and souls in need. Muriel had entered life. The scales were falling from her eyes and the nursery music was dying from her ears. She was encountering realities. This was more truly her début than that recent occasion when her parents gave a coming-out party for her and presented her to a select portion of her

own world in her best bib and tucker—or, rather, without bib or tucker.

The day after that dancing entrée she was the same girl as before. After this day she would never be a girl again. She would have girlish impulses and laughters and mischiefs till her copper hair was silver, but she had won to the title of woman. She was even going to learn something about the law—a very vague ghost to those who do not come in conflict with it, but a terrible wrestler to those who do.

She had asked the Hanigans and the Angelilli why they had not turned to the law for refuge from human oppression. She was about to witness innocence appealing to humanity for rescue from the law.

As she rose into the tonneau of the car there was a sort of explosion of people from a doorway on the other side of the street. A few children came first, then a woman or two, gesticulating men, and then two big policemen supporting between them a young woman of uncanny pallor and an unearthly smile. After the policemen followed a residue of men and women who kept seizing the officers by the coats. When the police hurled them away with flail-like back-sweeps of their big elbows they clutched again.

The knot came straggling and swaying along the street till it reached the side of the car where Muriel stood like one looking down into a pool.

The chief disturber was a lean and wan young Jew with great eyes and a curly chestnut-colored beard that gave him the look of the pictured Christ. This even in spite of his violence. He kept hurling himself upon one of the policemen, not striking him, but appealing and clutching past him at the prisoner, who smiled and whispered.

On the other side of the officers a hollow-eyed woman trudged, wringing her hands and muttering in an in-

audible voice. Her face was a very emblem of poverty in despair.

As the little mob reached Muriel's feet the officer whom the man assailed let go his hold on the girl and seized his tormentor by the lapels of his coat and held him fast while he spoke to him in one of those high wiry sopranos that certain big brave Irishmen have received by mistake—and employ without a hint of effeminacy:

"Look here now, Balinsky, I've been patient, but I'm wore out. I'm sorry for you, but orders is orders and the lah is the lah. I hate what I'm doin' worse than annyt'thing I've ever done, but I've got to do it. I'm after tellin' ye till I'm tired that it's not for me to l'ave her go. It's not for nobody to l'ave her go, unless it's President Wilson himself. I've stood for all the pullin' and hahlin' I'm goin' ta, and if you lay hand on me again I'll slam you into a cell for interferin' and assahlt and bat'thry and contimpt and—and you'll not even be down to the boat to see the gerl off."

This threat silenced the man for a moment. He put back his head and sent his gaze up into the blistering glare of the sun, and his throat worked in either prayer or blasphemy, Muriel could not tell which. But it moved her to intervene timidly:

"Officer, pardon me—but what is the matter? What has the poor thing done that you're arresting her?"

The mob all turned to the voice from overhead. The policeman, who felt the need of a little sympathy for his own unpitied estate, looked gratefully up at Muriel's beauty. The sight of her and her comfortable equipage and her gentle voice made an oasis. He took off his hat, wiped the dripping sweat-band, and, leaning on the car door with the familiarity of authority, explained, while the knot gathered about, watching Muriel as if she were a judge in a high place.

He made a long story of it, but he had an ulterior

motive, and he felt that he was gaining time by spending it in winning over a nice lady with an automobile.

"You see, it's like this, Miss. I never made a hahl I was so ashamed of, but it's me duty. This poor felly Balinsky has been gettin' the worst of it over there in Rooshian Poland and now he's gettin' still worser over here. Over there he heard that America was the land of the free, and all that old guff. The agents of the steamship companies goes about lyin' to those people to get them to buy tickets and come over here. They promise all sorts of things to the poor boobs. They buncoed this man Balinsky that way. His wife has a brother that's livin' here these twenty years. That's him there—the old one—Sokalski his name is. The Lord knows he's had rough goin' enough to have tipped off Balinsky more betther than to come over, but he did. And at that maybe it's worse yet in Rooshia. Annyhow, Balinsky hides his wife and his pretty dahter away from the persecutioners and over he comes to here. And he likes it, and by workin' like a dog and eatin' nothin' he saves enough to send over the money for to bring them across.

"Well, across the pond they come and they get through Ellis Island without a bit of throuble—no tracomy, or annyt'thing to turn them back.

"They're as happy here as only the likes of them could be who can thank God for not bein' massacred ivery marnin' because the Rooshians want a bit of rifle practice. Thin comes these hard times and all their savin's is gone and they're hard put to it to keep souls in their bodies.

"On'y for Mr. Sokalski here, who has a family of his own at that, they'd have gone on the charities. Then last week only poor Balinsky gets a job and comes runnin' home with the good news, and what does he find but his daughter has gone to maunderin'.

"Had ye noticed how when ye hurry home with good news there's ahlways bad news there ahead of ye?

"Well, annyhow, this poor gerl—Rachel her name is—is

turned to what you can see. She's babblin', and wouldn't the smile of her cut your heart in two, now? Balinsky runs for the docther and the docther sends her to the horspital. And then the throuble begins, for the lah requires the horspital to report it to the Immigration Board, and the lah requires the Board to deport the pore thing."

"Deport her?" Muriel gasped. "Send her back to Russia?"

"Yes, ma'am, that's the lah. If you come over to this country they'll turn you back if you have eye throubles or poverty or brain throubles. If you've none of them they give you a year of grace. But if you develop them within the year, back you go, were you the Imperor himself. There's no 'If,' 'And,' or 'But' about it. The lah says, 'Back to where you come from.'"

"It's a horrible law," Muriel cried.

"Maybe, but it's for the protection of us that's here."

"But you can't send a poor girl like that back alone. Has she any relatives there?"

"No, they're all over here. Her mother will have to go with her. That's the bad of it. They're not wanted there, and they'll suffer the more for runnin' away. But they can't stay here whatever. I didn't want to bring the patrol-wagon up and disgrace them, and I hate to take the women through the streets like they was crooks. But lah's lah and I'm only a cop. I was wonderin' could you —you see, there's no cabs to be had down here for love nor money. And the sun is b'atin' down on the bare heads of them and—"

"Why, yes," said Muriel, reluctantly enough, but more ashamed to refuse than to consent. When Jacques Parny understood he was infuriated, but Muriel quieted him with a glare. "And does the poor husband go back, too?" she asked.

The officer shook his head. "That s the worst of it all. He daren't go back. He would starve or be killed."

Balinsky, who had listened desperately, hung his pitiful face over the edge of the car. He had gained the impression from the policeman's deference that Muriel must be a personage of authority. He put his hands out to her, palms hungrily open and twitching, and he prayed to her:

"Lady, please — fine lady, dun't let dem sended my femmily beck by Rossia. You dun't know vat dey do to us, dose Cossacks—to keel is not all. I cannot go beck minesulf. My vife should die and nobody makes care by mein Rachel. Lady—lady—nice lady! I esk you. Pleass!"

The mother crept forward, too, and stretched out lean hands whose fingers struggled together in an anguish of appeal. She had wept her voice almost away, and her plea was in a raucous whisper; her wept-out eyes were dry and dull. Muriel could neither hear nor understand the language she used, but her eyes and her frantic hands were unendurably eloquent.

The old man Sokalski added his low prayer. Then a girl appeared on the other side of the car—a very beautiful girl, with no hat or veil to hide the slumberous glow of her hair. Muriel noted how like in color it was to her own hair.

The girl motioned Muriel closer and spoke softly, with hardly more of dialect than a foreignness of intonation:

"Lady—you should do something if you could by Mr. Balinsky. He is the brother of my mother. I am Maryla Sokalska. Mr. Balinsky did live by us in Orchard Street. He work so hard for the money to bring his wife and that poor girl, their daughter. If they go back he says he will make himself dead, for he knows they will die, too. Here they are happy; the poor girl gets well some day. But if you let them go, all will die."

"If I let them go!" Muriel cried. "What can I do?"

"Somebody can do something. It must be so. In this good country it is not meant that the law should kill three good people who work hard and do no wrong. In

Russia, yes. There they butcher the Jews, they rob them and beat them and drive them like sheep to the shears. But not in America. It is not meant to be so in America."

"No, no, it must not be so," Muriel groaned. "Somebody must stop it."

"Who will, if not you?" said Maryla.

Muriel never forgot those quiet words. They were like a motto for a life: "Who will, if not you?"

The officer attempted now to move into the car he had commandeered. But at the first effort to lift the Balinsky girl into the tonneau her mother and father broke forth into such shrieks that Muriel waved them away.

"You can't use my car for any such outrage," she stormed at the policeman. "If you're a man you'll quit tormenting these poor souls."

The officer glanced along the hot street and sighed to his companion:

"Come on, Ludwig. We've got to foot it."

"Wait, wait!" Muriel protested. "It's impossible that such a wicked thing should be done."

"It's done ahl the time, Miss," said Morahan.

Muriel spoke up with the positiveness of a spoiled child. "Well, it's not going to be done this time! I'll go to the Immigration Board myself!"

The policeman smiled at her warlike tone. "You'll have to go higher than that."

"Then I'll go to Washington. I'll make my father make the President stop it."

She believed that her father could do almost anything he wanted to; and she could make him do almost anything she wanted him to.

She would go to him at once. He was probably at home, wondering where she was. But he might have been delayed at his office. Since she was so far down-town she would make the try.

"Jacques," she said, "*au bureau de mon père.*"

Jacques muttered that it was high time, and, warning the crowd away with voice and horn, sent the car humming. Muriel called back to the despondent suppliants:

"Don't worry. My father will save them."

As Muriel was whisked round the corner into James Street she saw the two policemen pressing forward and the mournful flock trudging after.

CHAPTER XIII

THE car hurried with impatience along the twisted path of Water Street, under Brooklyn Bridge, and on to Wall Street, and up Wall Street to the new sky-scraper that housed the bank of which the present Jacob Schuyler was the third president of the name.

His private office was on the seventeenth floor. Muriel had seen it only once or twice in her life. She approached it without the awe of the usual visitor. She called to the office-boy, "Is my father in?" and rushed past him without formality. The oration she planned was equally informal. But when she bolted into the throne-room she found another man with her father.

Old Schuyler nearly went over backward in his swivel-chair at Muriel's irruption. When she paused at the sight of the stranger he said:

"Come in—come in. It's only Mr. Merithew. You've met, haven't you?"

"We have now, to my great delight," said Perry, rising and putting out his hand without waiting for hers.

She gave her hand into his, and her smile was more cordial than her father's as he watched the meeting. He meant to cut it short when he said:

"Well, young lady, I'm not home yet, as you see. Been detained here by a dozen things that have turned up."

"Of which I am one," said Perry.

Jacob ignored him: "Have you seen the new books, Muriel?"

"No, I haven't. Fact is, I broke in on you because—"

"How much?"

"Five thousand dollars in cash."

"Stop joking! I'm feeling poor to-day? That library cost me a hundred thousand and I'm— What do you want with all that money, anyway? Did you run over somebody?"

"Yes, but that isn't it. And maybe you'll have to take a trip to Washington for me."

"Good Lord! There's nobody in Washington in this weather except the poor President."

"He's the man I want you to see. You may not have to go, though, but— Well, anyway, you've got to keep the Immigration Board from deporting a poor girl who is feeble-minded."

"They can't deport you for a motor accident," was Jacob's pathetic quip.

She smiled politely as she ran on: "And I want the five thousand dollars to ransom a poor little Italian boy with. He has been kidnapped."

"Great Scott! What you really want, Muriel, is a doctor. Your mother said it was wrong to bring you to town in all this heat."

Muriel grew impatient and fiercely earnest.

"Now, you've got to give this to me, Daddy. It's terribly important. And you've got to use your influence to— But I'll wait till you've finished your business with Mr. Merithew."

"Don't go on my account," said Perry. "I'm here on the same errand. I ran over your yacht in my plane this morning, and it reminded me that your father would have a lot of money loafing around that I could use. So I took the train into town and caught him on the wing. Please don't give her my five thousand dollars, Mr. Schuyler."

Jacob sniffed, "Don't worry; I haven't any money that belongs to either of you."

Muriel protested, "But this is to save a little kidnapped boy from being killed by the Black Hand."

"And mine," said Merithew, "is to save an old Knickerbocker from being kidnapped by a little blackmailer."

Jacob frowned, but Muriel did not understand. She poured forth the story of the Italian mother. Her father, who was the eternal target for narratives of woe, was touched more by her distress than by what she described, while Perry Merithew, who knew little of such things, was moved to copious tears. He was an ardent and sincere sentimentalist. Otherwise he could not have been such a success—or was he a failure?—with women.

When, at the end of the recital, Muriel asked again for money, her father slowly shook his head. Perry Merithew was almost as horrified as Muriel was. She stormed and wheedled, but Jacob shook his head coldly.

Being an American father, he was used to the rebukes of his children and rather felt pride in their earnestness than anger at their lack of piety. He condescended to explain:

"My dear little girl, I was reading only the other morning about another such boy. The paper said that a hundred and fifty Italian children have been kidnapped in the last few years. All their mothers must have suffered agonies. Suppose I had tried to buy all those children back at five thousand dollars apiece. That would cost me seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. It wouldn't leave much money for the other poor people, would it? But it would cause the kidnapping of hundreds of other children, wouldn't it?"

Muriel could not endure generalizations. She could not visualize the miseries of the world by wholesale. She could see only those Angelillo women clinging to each other and crying to the world to save their child from torment.

She planted herself on her father's desk and thrust to the floor the unimportant papers of mere banking value. She talked to the old man as to a child, pleading, promising

never to bother him again if he would yield only this once, appealing to his generosity, and picturing again the scene she had witnessed. He watched her with soft eyes, but his mouth was firm and his head swung back and forth with never a dip of consent.

At length Perry Merithew cried out in a burst of emotion as he swallowed hard and batted his wet eyelids:

"I'll tell you, Miss Muriel, you persuade your father to lend me ten thousand, and I'll give you half of it."

Muriel stared at him in amazement. She saw the tenderness in his eyes, and she felt that her father, her cruel father, must have slandered him. She accepted his proffer with enthusiasm.

"Splendid!" said Muriel. "And you can come to the slums and see how they take it."

"No, thank you," said Perry. "The New York slums are the last place you'll ever find me."

"Then I'll tell them it was your money. You'll lend Mr. Merithew the ten thousand, Daddy, won't you?—please! for my sake."

"It is hardly a bankable proposition," said Jacob, turning and gazing out of the window at the panorama of the city, the river and the bay, all spread out before him like a possession. Perhaps he was thinking how much of it he owned. Perhaps he was thinking how many people under that multitude of roofs would be saved from despair, perhaps to triumph, by that five thousand dollars which Muriel wanted to turn over to a gang of criminals (*pour encourager les autres*) or which Perry Merithew wanted to pay out as a belated instalment on one of his love-affairs.

No! Money was not meant to be profaned by such reckless abuse of either good or bad motives.

Schuyler got rid of Merithew by a rigid economy of courtesy, and Perry bowed himself out with well-masked chagrin. Muriel pressed his hand, and thanked him in

superlatives, and felt that she had lost a noble champion when he had gone.

Jacob turned to Muriel for an account of her "escapade" as he called it—and it had been an escape for her, from the ignorance and indolence of her sheltered life.

Jacob was touched by the miseries of Muriel's clients, but then he knew so many others in even worse distress. His office hours as a banker had been largely devoted to hearing the hard-luck stories and the wild necessities of men no less desperate for playing with big stakes, or facing long pay-rolls with short cash.

Furthermore, as a rich man, Jacob Schuyler was assailed everywhere he went with appeals for alms. He could have spent his entire fortune every day without satisfying the greed of charity, which is one of the horse-leech's recently adopted daughters and, like the grave, never says "enough."

Like an old doctor, he was hardened to the cries of distress. The only new thing in the situation was the fact that his daughter had broken away from all the safeguards he had built about her, and run amuck among the tenements rife with disease and countless perils to a young girl.

This alarmed him more than any story of kidnapping or deportation. He told Muriel so, and alarmed her with his unsuspected coldness. She told him so.

He pressed a button in his desk and his secretary, Mr. Chivot, was there as by apparition, bowing to Muriel and waiting. Jacob said:

"Miss Muriel has run across an Italian atrocity and a harrowing case of deportation. She will give you the names and data. Get a detective and our charity man at work on them at once. Tell 'em to do what's necessary, and if I can help let me know. Give Mr. Chivot the facts, Muriel, and everything will be done the best way."

"But I—"

Jacob was gone. He walked out to the anteroom and

instructed a clerk to telephone his yacht to be ready; also to telephone the town house that dinner need not be served, and the country house that it need.

When he returned, Muriel was smothering the impassive Chivot with passionate appeals, and he was assuring her that nothing would be left undone.

"It better hadn't," she said with childish threat. "I'll be down the first thing in the morning."

"We'll go home to dinner now," said Jacob.

They went down in the elevator to the car and Jacob spoke to Parny in an undertone. The car made good speed northward, and at Twenty-third Street veered east.

"But this isn't the way home," said Muriel.

"Oh yes, it is," said Jacob. "The yacht's ready."

"But I'm not going out there. I'm stopping in town to-night."

"Oh no, you're not."

"I am so! If you don't let me out, I'll jump."

"Oh no, you won't."

"Then I'll scream and draw a crowd."

"Oh no, you won't."

And of course she didn't. Soldiers do not disobey their officers on parade, and thoroughly bred girls do not scream in the street on any account.

At the landing-station Muriel permitted her father to take her arm and coerce her gently into the launch and thence aboard the yacht.

She watched New York taken away from her and she chewed the bitter cud of oppression. Her lips twitched with her humiliation and with resolutions of rebellion. Then her heart would race with terror and pity at the fate of the little Angelillo boy, and she would blench to think how that mother and the Balinsky mother would be denouncing her as a deserter who promised salvation and took the gratitude and never came back.

At dinner her father described her actions to her mother,

and Muriel flashed in a nursery phrase, but in all seriousness:

'I never thought you'd tell mother on me. I'll never trust you again."

Jacob was bitterly hurt at this. He was more of an old woman about his children than their mother was.

Mrs. Susan Schuyler delivered Muriel a proper lecture on her duties to herself and to others. She had just reached the De Quinceyan height of saying:

"There's no crime like being inconsiderate, my child. People who are nice about their persons do not wander in the slums. And even if you are careless yourself you have no right to risk bringing Heaven knows what germs into your home. Try to think of others a little, my dear."

Muriel was trying not to think that her darling mother was a heartless fiend when suddenly she forgot her and interrupted her with a choking sound as if she had caught a fish bone in her throat.

"What in Heaven's name!" cried her mother.

"Look up!" cried Jacob, but Muriel groaned.

"My doctor, my nice young ambulance doctor! I had an engagement to tea with him in town. What will he think!"

The rest of the dinner was funeral-baked meats to the parents. They shook their heads over their daughter as if she had got her name into a scandal-sheet. In one busy day she had kicked over all the structure they had made of her life and her ideals.

But she was worrying about the proper form of apology to the young doctor. She felt more than ashamed for her discourtesy. She felt that she had wounded a dear friend. She saw him turned away from her door in New York, angered, humiliated, bewildered.

She went into the telephone-closet and worked over the book, running her finger up and down the wrong page and

getting her alphabet horribly twisted, as women do when they approach an index. When she had pursued Bellevue Hospital to its lair, and while she was repeating the number to herself and smiling already with cordiality over the apologies she would make to the charming, brilliant, heroic Dr. Worthing, the telephone rang at her ear. She answered it, coldly:

"Well?"

"Is this Mr. Schuyler's house?"

"Yes."

"Is Miss Muriel Schuyler at home?"

"I'll see. Who wants her?"

"This is the Yacht Club. Mr. Merithew would like to speak to her."

"All right."

Another voice, peremptorily: "Hello, hello!"

Muriel in her own voice: "Hello."

"Miss Schuyler, please."

"This is Miss Schuyler."

The same voice with maple syrup poured over it: "Oh, how do you do?"

"How do you do!"

"I say, Miss Schuyler—"

"Yes, Mr. Merithew."

"I've got it."

"Got what, Mr. Merithew?"

"Your five thousand dollars."

A squeal of incredulous joy: "No!"

"Umm-humm! Met a friend who's been selling the market short and touched him for ten. So I'm going to ransom your little Dago for you."

"You're an angel!"

"Thanks."

"Will you send the money over—or perhaps you'd rather bring it?"

"Neither. You've got to earn it."

"How?"

"They're dancing here to-night, and you've got to come over and give me one maxixe."

"H'm. I don't see how I can, very well."

"Not for five thousand dollars for one dance? That's more than the Castles get for a whole week."

"Well, I—er—"

She had seen that Perry Merithew was not afraid of anything. He was not afraid even of proposing such an adventure to her. But she was just a little afraid of him. Still, his voice was indescribably gentle, as he pleaded:

"Not for the little Italian boy's sake? Salome danced a man's head off; you can dance a boy's head on."

"Well, of course, when you put it that way."

"The orchestra's fine to-night, too. Just as we finish that hand-twirling business in the maxixe you'll find five thousand dollars in your palm, and nobody else needs to know but you and me."

"We-ell, all ri-ight."

Her voice was slow, but her heart was drumming like a startled partridge.

She talked to the old man as to a child, pleading, promisin

r to bother him again, if he would yield only this once.

CHAPTER XIV

MURIEL sat back from the telephone and stared at it with awe. It was like the mouth of a gargoyle, and a kind of curse hung about its black lips. With syllables of light enchantment it had offered her an adventure. But sweet words swiftly lose their savor in the ear, as candies grow sour upon the tongue.

To steal away from home to a yacht club and dance with a married man of whom her father disapproved and whose name she dared not mention to her mother—that did not sound well in the remembrance.

But to refuse to go and by refusing end the hopes of the pitiful Italian mother whose stolen child she had promised to ransom—that was not pretty, either.

Why did she fret? Everybody danced. The place was respectable. The crowd about her would be the select coterie usual at the Yacht Club—husbands and fathers, wives and daughters, and reputable bachelors and spinsters.

She wondered that she was making so much of a problem of it. If one of the fellows she played with had dared her to sneak through a window and go out in a motor-boat to skim the creamy moonlight off the Sound she would have thought it a lark; and if the young man got foolish she would smack his face for him and accept his apology, finish the cruise, and sneak home in the delicious fatigue of a harmless mischief.

But there was something about Mr. Merithew that was uncanny to her. She could not know yet what it was. He invited her to dance with him in a brilliantly lighted room in a large crowd. At the end of the dance he was

to give her five thousand dollars for a charity. It was a deal of money and it meant a great deal to him. Why should she hesitate? The dance was just a little graceful tribute to her; something less trite than inclosing the money with a sheaf of roses. That was all, and yet, why did she feel uneasy? It was the high stake, perhaps. Yes, it must be the high stake.

She had a brother who was always betting on everything; sometimes when he was motoring he would play a kind of mental poker based upon the license numbers of approaching automobiles.

She had noticed that the stupidest thing became thrilling when it involved money. To dance once for five thousand dollars! To dance to save a child from being cut up into parcels for the post—how could that fail to excite her?

She herself lacked the true gambling instinct. She would play bridge or euchre or, on the sly, poker; she would play for nothing or for burnt matches or pebbles and love the game. But she had friends who always wanted to play for every cent they had or she had.

That spirit was what she surmised in Perry Merithew's amiable manner. Perry Merithew was a high-stake gambler. He never wanted to quit till he or his opponent was bankrupt. The game he liked best of all and gambled upon most desperately was the flirtation game with a woman for adversary and the last favors for stakes.

Other people flirted, ogled, philandered, spooned perhaps a little, and parted. When Perry Merithew took interest enough in a woman to cross glances with her it was no fencing-bout for points, it was a duel *à l'outrance*.

It brought him to a shameful death eventually. Muriel could not foresee this, of course, but she felt a certain desperateness about the man. There is an instinct that young things are born wild with. Canaries, mice, children, all have to be tamed, no matter how domesticated their parents are. Instinct is independent of experience:

it is the racial memory that warns the young from dangers their ancestors suffered from. The activities of the Perry Merithews are not for the welfare or the preservation of the race. They have to steal upon the Muriels.

It was such an instinct that rendered Muriel peculiarly uneasy about Perry Merithew. Suddenly her muscles sent her hand out to the telephone to call him up and cancel the engagement. But when Central murmured "Nummmba, please!" she said "Never mind!" and set the receiver back on the hook. She thought again of the duty she owed the parents of the kidnapped child. She reproached herself for being a coward. What difference did it make what Mr. Merithew was? She could take care of herself anywhere.

This sort of Ophelia soliloquy must be a frequent experience in the souls of young women. Great battles are thought out under their fantastic coiffures.

Muriel's thoughts were caught from Perry by the memory of Dr. Worthing. She looked up the number of the hospital once more and, calling it, brought to the very porch of her ear the voice of the distant young man.

"Is this Dr. Worthing?" she said, and had back an indifferent:

"Yes."

"This is Miss Schuyler."

"Oh." It was just a syllable, yet it conveyed, "So you are the young woman who invites strange gentlemen to tea in a closed-up house and neither appears nor sends word to the servants; you leave your guest to be treated like a burglar scouting for information. And now, after abandoning me on your door-step for half an hour, you have the front to call me up several hours later."

All this Muriel read in his monosyllable. Much capacity in an "Oh!"

She cried: "I'm just too terribly sorry for words, Dr. Worthing. I wouldn't have had it happen for worlds, not

for worlds! But, you see, my father carried me off. Simply dragged me home by the hair of the head. He wouldn't let me stop to telephone or anything. I absolutely could not get away from him a single minute."

"Oh," was again the sole comment. But now it said to her: "So that's it! I understand. I feel better. I thought I wasn't mistaken in trusting you. Please don't worry about it another minute. I thought you had forgotten me, and now I find that you were remembering me all the time."

At least this much she extracted from that versatile "Oh!" Then she shrilled along the wire:

"Can you ever forgive me? Of course you can't, but will you?"

"I'll try," he said with a comfortable chuckle.

"And will you also try to keep one more engagement? It's awfully important, you know."

"Is it another tea-party?" he asked, anxiously.

"Oh no. This time I— Well, are you going to be up early in the morning?"

"Doctors don't have early or late. All hours look alike to the poor doctor. What time you going to be up?"

"I hope to reach New York before ten."

"And you want me to call at your house?—again?"

"You'd never trust me again. Let me come to you."

"You to me!"

"Would it be very improper?—there at the hospital?"

"Dozens of women come here every day. They are sad sights, most of them, not at all like you."

She clipped this short: "Then I'll call for you at about ten o'clock?"

"I'll be here."

"And you've found out about the boy? There is hope for him?"

"Yes; it requires an operation, but it's a beautiful one."

"Ugh! How can you call an operation beautiful?"

"Anything is beautiful that straightens a cripple or makes a sick body well."

"Oh, I see!"

"Well, good-by till to-morrow morning."

"And you've really forgiven me?"

"Oh yes, indeed."

"Good-by."

She felt that he was wonderful to think of such things, to be at work at the trade of righting with science the wrongs of fortune. She sat back and smiled at the telephone. It was a good gargoyle now.

How different Dr. Worthing was from Mr. Merithew! Perry's only industry, so far as she could find out, was the squandering of money on himself. Still, he had been capable of such a height of sacrifice as to double his debt so that he could give half of it away. That was dividing his cloak with a beggar in saintly style. And yet there was something not quite wholesome about him, something not quite convincing about his generosity and deference.

Young Dr. Worthing was utterly unlike him. He was youthful, earnest, bossy, and—aseptic. He was worth a dozen Merithews.

And yet sometimes the wholesome is less engaging than the morbid, the safe than the dangerous. To a normal woman a serpent is an object of horror mitigated by fascination; the deadlier it is the more fascinating it is.

Having resolved to dare all and go to the club, Muriel's next problem was how to get there. If she asked for one of the cars her father and mother would know of it, and she could not stop to argue the matter out with them. They would forbid the excursion, and she would have to make it anyway. It would be kinder to leave them in peace of ignorance. Children are often considerate of their parents in this way; preferring a benevolent deception to an open disobedience that may be humiliating to the parents. Muriel did not fancy going alone in the dark or arriving alone in the light. She did not fancy

taking her maid for companion or even the old housekeeper. She could telephone a girl friend, but she did not want a confidante.

She sat in the telephone-closet meditating and suffocating till she had to go out for air. She met her mother in the hall and her mother said:

"Oh, Muriel, I forgot to tell you that Winnie Nicolls was here to see you half a dozen times to-day. He's got a new car and he wanted you to christen it. He wants to name it Muriel."

A whimsical fashion of naming motors had begun a brief life.

At the mention of Nicolls's name Muriel shook her head wearily.

Her mother cautioned her: "Be nice to him, my dear. He adores you. Better call him up and ask him to run over in the morning."

"All right, Mumsey dear," Muriel answered, with an angelic brightness which her mother credited to a refreshing obedience. It was due instead to the sudden realization that she could use Winnie and the new car for transportation to the tryst with Perry Merithew.

The nicknames of the great are rarely to their advantage. Many of the loftiest and bravest have been called by diminutives that would not have honored a pet lamb or a kitten.

Winthrop Nicolls was, or soon would be, so rich and with so solid and wide a wealth that he would make even such brilliant capitalists as Jacob Schuyler look shoddy. Yet his majestic first name was doomed to be belittled to "Winnie" and its wearer had somehow seemed doomed to fit it. Not that he was effeminate. He was simply a frail, scared, humble sapling that chanced to grow on a mountain of gold. Beneath stood one of the most powerful families in American history. He descended from that Colonel Richard Nicolls whom the Duke of York

sent over to seize New Amsterdam from old wooden-legged Peter Stuyvesant. After his death the Dutch took it back again and named it New Orange for a while, but it became New York at length for keeps. Another Nicolls was attorney-general at the time of Leisler's rebellion as far back as 1689. The Nicollses had been more or less recognized governors of New York ever since.

And now the family destinies were about to be clamped on the sloping shoulders of Winnie Nicolls, whose father was not expected to outlive his vanishing kidneys. Meanwhile Winnie was the Prince of Wales, the dauphin, the heir apparent. Other princelings had at his age piled up as big a debt as Julius Cæsar's and as bad a record. But Winnie was harmless and timid.

It was difficult to look at his yellow-white hair, like unripe corn, his pale eyes of indigo water, his skim-milk skin, and his nursery smile, and think of him as the lord of a hundred million dollars. It was hard for Winnie to think of himself so.

He faced his past and his future with the paralyzed terror of an infant that has toddled into the thick of Broadway and stands crying in all directions while traffic is hauled up short until a policeman or a bystander can run out and take him by the hand. Only nobody could lead Winnie out of his wealth.

He wanted Muriel to take him by the hand and save him from its menace. He loved her, had loved her from the time when as a fellow-infant at Newport or Biarritz she used to take his pail of sand away and spank him with his own little shovel. She was then a trussed-up, spindle-legged little snipe that had not learned mercy.

As her head grew up and her skirts grew down she continued to bully him more and more delicately. Sometimes when he broke a roller-skate in Central Park she would lend him one of hers and they would scud with clasped arms along the steep walks among the scudding pauper brats in the fine democracy of childhood while

their nurses stormed in vain. Winnie was always afraid, and Muriel dragged him all the faster till he howled for mercy.

With the ruthlessness of the helpless, who cannot help themselves to anything except some victim's time and strength, Winnie settled himself as a pensioner on Muriel's heart. Eventually Muriel grew tired of supporting him. For years now she had been running away from him.

To-night, for once, she suddenly found his company desirable; he could pay an instalment on his debt by being useful. She went back to the closet, called up his home, got him to the telephone, and sang out:

"Hello, Win, it's me—Muriel."

"Oh, hel-low-oo!" he chortled with a baby's gurgle. "Say, Mury, I got a new car—ninety horse-power."

"So I hear. Bring it over and let's try it out."

He coughed in her ear, and mumbled: "I'm afraid it's a little late. I was just getting ready for dodo."

Muriel gnashed her teeth at his puerility: "Ask your nurse to let you sit up a little while, and come on over."

This shamed him. "Oh, aw ri'," he said, "I'll be there in a jiffy. I'll serenade you with the honker."

"Don't come in; just stop outside. I'll run down and meet you. I'm all ready."

"Aw ri'!"

She had taken off her street suit when she reached home and thrown on a light evening gown for dinner. It would serve to dance in now.

Muriel could have marched out at the door with everybody's approval to meet Winthrop Nicolls, but she had committed herself to an escapade, and she wanted to complete it.

She took up a novel, kissed her father and mother, yawned ostentatiously, and left them in the living-room playing a game of bézique that had lasted for thirty years and was going yet.

When Muriel had left, Mrs. Schuyler whispered to her husband:

"She's going out with Win Nicolls in his new car to-morrow."

Jacob smiled craftily. If they had known that she was stealing into the moonlight to meet him it would have done them a power of good. The old love to see their young adding their own romance to the wisdom of parental selection.

Muriel went up the front stairway with dignity, stole down the back stairway without meeting a servant, and hastened out on the service-porch. She ran along the muffling grass through the mysterious formal gardens with their plumy fountains, out past the lodge-keeper's vine-smothered home, to the road. No one saw her. She hid behind a shrub while automobile flashed by after automobile in a nebulous swirl till at length a motor came sputtering up behind a search-light of an almost biting glare.

It was Winthrop Nicolls, bareheaded and eager. He stepped out and helped her in, and began to back round for a return along the road he had come by. But Muriel said:

"What do you say to dropping in at the Yacht Club for a while?"

"No, thanks. I want to show you the speed of the new car—Muriel her name is, if you don't mind."

"I don't mind, but I'd really like to stop at the club for a few minutes. Just for a dance or two."

"Ah no! Let's spin. I want to spin." He whimpered like the baby everybody kept him. But Muriel was obstinate. He had to yield.

The very car seemed to sulk along. Muriel was in a tangle of remorses at her multiplex deceptions. She felt a reproach in the innocence of the very moonlit bay where the yachts were nodding at anchor like a great flock of wild geese asleep.

There was a drowsy animation about the club-house veranda. In all the deeper shadows couples were ensconced. At dimly lighted tables groups of people seemed to have fallen asleep over their mint juleps and rickeys. But inside the house a small band was whacking and tootling, and dancers were earnestly at work.

At that time the fever of the dancing-sickness was at its very crest. The people at this club were inviting pneumonia (which never accepts invitations) by tangoing themselves to a glow and then plunging into the cold outer air to shoot icy drinks into their horrified insides. The shock seemed not to shatter but to temper their fine steel.

Muriel looked for Mr. Merithew. She saw him on the floor, gyrating in a hesitation waltz about the stately form of Mrs. Tom Johns Bettany. Everybody called her by all three names or, for short, Mrs. T. J. B.

Muriel did not approve of Mrs. Tom Johns Bettany, and she regretted to see Perry Merithew in such company. It would be a duty to get him out of her clutches.

Mrs. T. J. B. was old enough to have a daughter who looked to be nearly as old as her mother; for Mrs. T. J. B.'s white hair had the effect of a powdered wig. In fact she had not honestly earned white hair. Her swift high life had brought a few patches of gray into her tresses long before their time. She had thereupon bleached the whole mass and given out that it turned white in a single night from grief over T. J. B., who had run his motor off a bridge into a river and had died a double death as he had lived a double life.

Nobody believed his widow in this or any other story; but the white hair was undeniably becoming to her. It gave her the air of a shepherdess at a *bal poudré*. Her manners and morals were appropriately Watteau.

She had several sons whom she loved devotedly at convenient hours, and disgraced discreetly. She had a gift of

love and deceit for nearly everybody—except other women. Them she neither loved nor deceived—not even her daughter Nadine, who despised, adored, and imitated her mother.

The daughter, generally known as "Pet," had no reputation left by the time she was sixteen. The general verdict concerning Pet was "she's as bad as they make 'em," but also that she was "an amusin' little cuss." Everybody was afraid of her, afraid to cut her lest she cut back, afraid to omit her from invitation-lists lest she start a war of reprisal. Besides, the Bettanys were related to nearly everybody, and to brand them was to be involved in the scorchy smell.

Recently Pet had shown an alarming interest in Winnie Nicolls. Muriel felt that Pet would get him if somebody didn't watch out. Winnie felt it, too, and clung to Muriel. Muriel was afraid that she would have to marry Winnie to save him from Pet.

But first she must save poor Mr. Merithew from Pet's mother. After trying to catch his eye, she dragged Winnie out on the floor and set him to the hesitation waltz, whose rhythm he had not yet learned. Muriel, as usual, had to do the leading. She steered Winnie in Mr. Merithew's wake till she overtook him and spoke him:

"Good eve-ning, Mr. Meri-thew!"

Perry did not know her voice well enough to recognize it. He wheeled Mrs. Tom Johns Bettany around till he could see who had named him. He almost fell out of her arms as he recognized Muriel. He called out:

"The next is mine!"

"All right, if it's a maxixe."

"It will be."

"All right."

Then Winnie spun her away, leaving Perry to pacify Mrs. T. J. B.

"I thought you had the next with Pet," said Mrs. T. J. B.

"The next after the next," lied Perry.

She knew he lied, but she did not care to fight her daughter's battles. She contented herself with demanding:

"How did you come to know the Schuyler girl?"

"Her father introduced me," said Perry.

"Liar!" sniffed Mrs. T. J. B.

At the same time Winnie was saying to Muriel:

"I won't let you dance with that fella."

"Why not?"

"He's a bounder!"

"As a dancer?"

"As a man!"

"Why didn't you tell me so before?"

"I didn't know you knew him."

"I didn't till to-day."

This was terrifying.

"Wh-where did you meet him?"

"At my father's office."

"Fibber!" said Winnie.

Muriel only laughed at his peevishness. She explained:

"I'm dancing with him strictly on business."

"Dancing on business!"

"Uh-huh."

Winnie was not used to understanding people or he would not have been content to leave this new riddle unsolved.

When the music died out Perry Merithew delivered Mrs. T. J. B. at a crowded table, ordered her a long, cool drink, and set forth across the floor. Pet leaned forward expectantly. When he passed her by, she gasped. She saw him go up to Muriel Schuyler, of all people. Saw her rise with a smile!

Pet had not thought it of Muriel. She disapproved severely. She was shocked.

There is nobody whom the indiscretion of good people shocks so much as it shocks bad people. Pet left her

place and sat down by her mother. They exchanged glances of anger and suspicion.

In August, 1913, the maxixe was just beginning its sway as the supplanter of the tango. It was still chiefly left to the professionals who performed elaborate duets about the floors in alternation with the general dances. But a few progressives had taken lessons, and Muriel was one of these. Perry Merithew another. He had not studied anything in his life as he studied the new dances. He was proud of his maxixe.

Muriel was afraid of Mr. Merithew. He was even more afraid of her; he was as afraid of her innocence as the devil is of holy water. He had resolved not to flirt with Muriel, even if she made the first advances, as most of the women and young girls did. Whatever ulterior interest he took in her, he had gauged her as a girl of quick temper and innate honesty. She might take permanent umbrage at a premature liberty.

He did not know that Mrs. T. J. B. and Pet and young Nicolls were watching that dance with vital interest. The two women were puzzled by Perry's icy aloofness as he danced. He kept as far from Muriel as he could without letting her go entirely. This was suspicious in him.

He and Muriel took their positions side by side, with his right arm back of her, and as the languorous contralto melody of the Brazilian courtship dance began to hum they set forth on the voyage, four steps on the left heel, four on the right, and so through the various figures, *les à côté, la corta jaca,* the back two-step, the skating, and all the turns and dips.

Merithew kept the maximum distance from Muriel, held her hand daintily as with pincers, and accomplished the ritual with the lofty solemnity of a sacred dance. During that part of the maxixe where he must raise his elbows above her shoulders and clasp all four hands

under her chin, Muriel glanced up coquettishly at him, now on this side, now on that, according to the formula.

Though the pantomime was purely mechanical, she was studying his eyes. She found a polite cordiality in the lenses. That was all. But back of them she thought another emotion lurked. It was that which one suspects behind the soft irises of a purring leopard, but she could not quite be sure. It needed all of Merithew's control to keep the fur over his claws. He could hardly prevent his relaxed arms from tightening about that fresh, rich body. His heart beat madly under his *boutonnière*. But he controlled his muscles and his expression and paid her the homage of indifference. He even spared her any compliment except one:

"You dance wonderfully."

"So do you," she said.

And then the music stopped. And with it Muriel's heart sank.

"My money!" she gasped. "You promised it, and now—"

He bowed and commenced to applaud. It had become the regular habit for the dancers to applaud and beg for a few added measures. It was a kind of tribute to the women they had danced with. It implied insatiability.

The maxixe tune began anew and Perry put out his arms, Muriel stepped into them in skater poise, and they began heeling forward. Perry Merithew was a trifle less remote. He pleaded:

"I wish you'd give me just one more dance, Miss Schuyler."

"Impossible, Mr. Merithew. My mother doesn't know I'm out."

He relished this confession of duplicity. It gave him hope for the future, but he pretended to sigh.

"Then I suppose I'll have to pay you what I promised."

"Terms strictly C. O. D.," she said.

"Your company comes high, but I must have it," he

sighed. As he shuttled to and fro back of her he released one of his hands, slipped it into the pocket inside his waistcoat, drew forth and palmed a little roll of five one-thousand-dollar bills, with a rubber band about them.

In the figure where the man holds the woman's hands aloft and she pivots in a slow circle, as if suspended from his fingers puppet-wise, Merithew transferred the tiny parcel to her hand. Her fingers closed on it just as the last strain of music ended.

She thrust the costly wafer into the bosom of her gown, the only pocket she had. She could not restrain a triumphant little toss of the head. She was very beautiful, Merithew's soul declared.

Neither of them realized that they had been closely watched. Winnie Nicolls's idolatrous eyes, suspecting nothing, saw nothing. Mrs. Tom Johns Bettany and her daughter Pet, suspecting everything, saw more than everything.

Mrs. T. J. B. whispered to her daughter, "Did you see that?"

Pet nodded sullenly: "He gave her something. What do you suppose it was? It looked like cigarettes."

"It looked like money!" said Mrs. Bettany, grimly.

CHAPTER XV

WITH five thousand dollars in her breast pocket Muriel felt highly important. She was afraid of herself at last. She bade Perry Merithew a careless good-night for the public and for himself:

"A million thanks! You are a very good man."

This almost floored him. He had just presence of mind enough to say:

"If I'm such a good man, when do you see me again?"

She stared at him in surprise.

He explained, hastily, "To tell me about our Italian child, you know."

"Oh, of course. I'll telephone you to-morrow."

"Better let me call."

She stared at him with misgivings.

He ventured another tack: "Come over here and dance with me again."

"I don't think I'd better."

"Where's the harm?" he urged. "Haven't I a right to a little interest on my money, and a right to know what happens to it?"

"All right, I'll be here." She laughed, but uneasily. She did not like the complication, but she could see no way out of it without insulting her benefactor or returning him the money. That she must not do. She repeated her "Good night," but she did not feel that he was quite such a good man, after all.

She turned and, picking up Winnie Nicolls with a long, prehensile glance, made her way out, dawdling and

nodding here and there. She had braked down her feet, but her heart was going at full speed.

When Winnie hoisted her into the car she breathed a deep breath and felt important enough to reach up and pluck a pair of stars for her ear-rings. She breathed deep of the luxury of being important to somebody in distress.

She felt that she ought to speed at once to New York to those poor Italians for whom she had braved so much. She had always wanted to save somebody's life in the surf or in a burning building or somewhere. Now she was about to accomplish her prayer. She must let nothing make her late, let nothing prevent her arrival in Batavia Street. She wanted to tell Winnie about it, but she was afraid he would read her a lecture like her mother's. He would warn her to save the money. He was notoriously stingy.

Like many of the rich, he was capable of astounding generosities and incredible parsimonies. In later years he would give the new cathedral a hundred-thousand-dollar check and haggle with a golf caddie over a rebate for a lost ball on the same afternoon.

Muriel decided not to tell Winnie. She realized that the car was now going at a dazzling speed. Winnie was afraid of people, but not of engines. The racing car was hung so low that they seemed to be riding on their spines, dragged forward by their heels. Winnie was watching the road with one eye and the speedometer with the other.

He was chortling like a baby. He was smashing the law to flinders, but what was a small fine to him? He was risking his life every moment; but his own life was rather stupid, anyway. If he saw anybody else in danger —a car, or a buggy, or a child—he would run into a stone wall and take what came. Better any risk than a life of low speed.

Muriel understood this motor psychology and felt it herself when she ran her own car. But to-night, after a

sickening swerve or two, as death or murder was escaped by a tire's breadth and a tire's grip, it came over her that she was risking more than her own life. The searchlight peopled the road ahead with imagined horrors, balky horses backing across the road, children wandering along in a chain of hands, a flung shoe, a snap in the steering-gear, a flaw in an axle. As in a waking nightmare she passed through hideous experiences.

A cold fear overspread her. What if she were killed or crippled? What if her five thousand dollars were consumed in a blaze of gasolene? Who would save the Angelillo boy?

She shivered so violently that Winnie asked:

"Got a chill?"

"Yes. T-take me home."

"Why in the Lord's name don't you women ever carry a wrap? The car was just warming up."

He jammed the brakes on, backed and filled, and turned about with angry snarls of the clutch, and took her home. She felt kindlier to him as she descended outside the lodge. He had been amiably deceivable, a minute-man escort, and obedient, if surly. So she promised him a real try-out on the Motor Parkway at her first leisure moment.

Then she stole back to the house and entered it with an ease that promised well for the first burglar. The watch-dogs barked, but nobody ever heeded them.

Meanwhile, Muriel had left Perry Merithew alone with the memory of her and the presence of the Bettany women.

Merithew was too much of a connoisseur not to have thrilled at the charm of Muriel, so delectable, so nearly ready, like a peach that the sun has ripened on one side. But Merithew was also too expert as a conquistador of women to attempt to pluck the peach too soon. He had offered Muriel no hint of gallantry—in fact, he found that she had left in his heart a most unusual emotion for

him, a kind of reverence, and what is more reverend than a young girl of whom nature is just making a woman?

When Muriel was gone from his arms and from his sight he felt an unbearable loneliness. He wanted to follow her, to be with her always; he wanted to possess her in all holiness. He wished he could marry her.

He happened to have a wife, but it should not be hard to be rid of her. She would have divorced him long ago if he had but threatened a fight. He had kept his wife not for her own sake, but for a protection against other women, those tiresome women who tried to turn every fleeting romance into a sentence for life.

But Muriel Schuyler—to be sentenced to life with her would be equivalent to an exile into paradise. He marveled at her extraordinary influence over him. He had just paid five thousand dollars to win her praise. He called himself a sublime jackass. Yet he felt that the investment was the best he had ever made. The other five thousand he had borrowed was to quiet another woman who was blackmailing him. That hurt. It always hurt Perry to pay a debt: to exchange a present treasure for a forgotten pleasure. But he loved to toss money away for a bribe or a tip or a trinket or a smile. He had paid Muriel Schuyler a large sum in advance. What was he going to get back for it? What debt did it fasten on her?

Suddenly he realized that it put her under no obligation at all. She was just the transfer-agent who would collect from him and pay it to some Italian scum.

But he would not accept this version. Yesterday he had not known Muriel Schuyler. To-day she was his admirer, his partner in an escapade. She had danced with him and praised his dancing and his good heart. This was progress. What might not the future bring?

He imagined numberless results of this charity of his, but they were all pleasant. Who could have dreamed that the train of events his generosity set in motion would

end in the crushing wreck that ended his life in disgrace and horror, with none so poor to do him reverence?

He thought to escape the next dance by keeping out of sight. But Pet Bettany cornered him on the veranda, went into his pockets for his cigarette-case, and took his cigarette from his lips to light her own. Then she seated herself on the railing in a graceful awkwardness, held him *en brochette* with a long, steely stare, and said:

"I say, Perry boy, what's the little doings between you and Muriel Schuyler? Some new intrigue?"

"What intrigue could I have with her?" he gasped.

"It's me that's asking you, Perry."

"Don't be a fool."

"I'd be a foolisher fool if I believed you, old dear. What did you put in her hand?"

"In whose hand?"

"Oh, I saw you!" she sneered. "Come along—what was it? It looked like money."

He laughed violently, but with such effort that she said:

"Quit it; you're a punk actor."

He eyed her angrily. "Are you insane enough to accuse me of giving Muriel Schuyler money? Why, her father could buy and sell me and never know it."

"Her father, yes; but he's very close with her. Do you deny that you gave her money?"

"Of course I do."

"Then that proves it," she laughed. "I find that if I just copper everything you say, Perry darling, I come out ahead."

He was scarlet with angry confusion: "Why in God's name should I give Muriel Schuyler money secretly?"

"That's what I'm asking you, dove."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself and your dirty tongue."

"Thanks, duck. But you've lent money to me. You

know you'll never get it back. I thought you might be lending Muriel a little on the same terms."

"You—oh, you—you—" He could not speak the words he thought even to her, to whom his speech was so free. He left her without ceremony and walked away. The insult was so convincing that her triumphant laughter followed him. He turned and walked back, his eyes blazing: "Even you ought to have sense enough to know that Muriel Schuyler has too much money to take money from me."

"No woman can ever have enough money or clothes or jewels, sweetheart. We're all grafters. Muriel is just learning the game, I suppose."

"Besides, I'm broke."

"That's when you're most generous, Perry. Like everybody else, you get stingy when you're in funds. If I'd known you were stony, I'd have beaten little Muriel to it. My dressmaker, Dutilh, is awfully nasty. He won't give me any new fall clothes till I pay for last winter's. He'll let last spring's go over, but he says he has to raise some cash to pay the customs on his new importations. You couldn't slip me a little till I get my next allowance, could you? Come along; they're playing a one-step. You can pass it over then. Or must it always be a maxixe?"

"I'm bust, I tell you."

"I was thinking that if you could, I should be able to keep your confidence about Muriel. Fact is, I might help you out. You could meet her at my house. She doesn't like us a damn bit, but she might be willing to use us. What about it, eh?"

Perry was choking with rage. He was tempted to tell Pet that he had given Muriel the money to ransom an Italian *ragazzo* with. But even his tardy imagination could foresee how such a fairy story would be received.

Pet was one of those shrill-voiced, loud-laughing creatures that occur in all circles, in royal courts no less than in farmsteads. No breeding seems ever to soften them.

If he told Pet the truth her whoop would rouse all the dead in the club-house. He could think of no plausible lie. All he could think of was an impatient, idiomatic protest. He spoke it in the free language that obtains among intimate acquaintances who know better but do worse. He said:

"Look here, Pet, you mind your own business and keep your big mouth shut about a girl that's too decent for you to understand or you'll wish you'd never been born."

Pet stared at him with a hateful shrewdness and took the threat with a shrug of amusement:

"It's like that, eh? Just like that?"

Then her laughter came, a big, peasant cackle that made everybody in the club uneasy, made everybody groan, "I wish she wouldn't!"

Even Mrs. T. J. B. rushed up and said for the millionth time since Pet was born:

"In Heaven's name, less noise!" Then she asked, eagerly: "Has Perry been telling you a funny story?"

"Yes," Pet shouted, "one of his very funniest."

She howled again, and Perry would have fled, but Pet caught him by the arm with her big and painful hand, and held him while she dismissed her mother, curtly: "You go on about your business, mamma."

When Mrs. T. J. B. had doddered away, shaking her head over the plebeian changeling she had had to rear, Pet said: "Look here, Perry, you'd better be nice to me, for I can be no end nasty to you, and I've been looking for something on your little Muriel. Winnie Nicolls likes her too well to suit me, and this is just what I need. But I need the clothes worse. Think it over, old thing! You may go now."

That night Perry said his prayers backward; at least he vowed that he would never again attempt a humane deed with a worthy motive. It resulted in far too much wickedness.

CHAPTER XVI

THE next morning Muriel's problem was how to get to town. She finally accepted her father's invitation to visit his new library. He was an early riser, and they went down the East River in the cool of the morning. The new accessions to the library were wonderful treasures to be gloated over with a miser's clutch, and at any other time she would have reveled in the unique copies, the famous bindings, the time-browned pages that generations had thumbed and men centuries dead had annotated, or the old maids of books whose curious value was that their leaves had never been cut.

But Muriel was thinking only of her appointment with Dr. Worthing, trying to imagine a convincing excuse to escape.

The librarian almost wept over a Caxton of which there were only two in the world; and this one had a title-page which the other one lacked. Jacob could hardly wait to get it out of his hands and brag about it to Muriel.

But Muriel was thinking of the living. She could not get her mind on the toys her father was pulling out of his Christmas stocking. She stared at a prayer-book given by an old king to his daughter with a dedication asking her to "*pray for your louving fader that gave you this booke and goddes blessyng therwith.*" She could not read the old script, or even the little pasted-in translation of it. Her thoughts were in Batavia Street, and she said:

"Hadn't I better call up Mr. Chivot and see what he has done about the Italian boy and that poor girl?"

"Later, later! that can wait," said Jacob. "Would

you look at this *Morte d'Arthur!* Old Nicolls paid a million dollars for his last accessions, but he hasn't got a duplicate of this."

Muriel thought that King Arthur could wait better than the Angelilli or the Balinskys. There was a telephone extension in the library and she got Mr. Chivot on the wire. He said that he had met unexpected obstacles. That was what she expected him to meet. The Angelillo family, he said, when he called with a detective, had received him rudely and ordered him and the police to get out of their sight and to keep out of it. He had also called upon an important member of the Immigration Board at his club the night before, but the gentleman had said that these things were regulated by laws, and that while the laws occasionally inflicted hardships, it was for the general good that they should be obeyed, and that it was a great mistake to make exceptions at the request of important people; especially at their request, indeed, since it confirmed the general opinion that people with a pull could do what they wanted with the laws.

The end of the story of failure was Mr. Chivot's statement that he would keep both matters in mind, but that, if he might presume to advise, it would be far better for Miss Muriel to take her father's advice and drop out of it.

Muriel could have screamed at the deferential, contemptuous tone he took. She choked as she said:

"Thank you ever so much, Mr. Chivot. Good-by!"

She had to be polite to her father's secretary, but she could talk to her father as she wished. She turned on Jacob with ferocity that made him forget the *Recuyell of the Hystoryes of Troye* that he held in his hand. She quoted Mr. Chivot's message in a burlesque of his wire-drawn tones, and she cried:

"That's what I get for appealing to you men! You dragged me home last night like a poodle on a chain, and your Mr. Chivot lectures me like a tutor. And between you a little boy gets cut to pieces and a poor family gets

torn apart. And what do you care? I ask you for a puny little five thousand dollars and you tell me I'm affected by the heat. But you've spent nearly a million dollars on this library. Mr. Merithew had the goodness to offer to borrow the money and give it to me, and what did you say? You said, 'It's not a bankable proposition.' Nothing human and kind and considerate and warm-hearted and pitiful is a bankable proposition. Well, you can keep your bankable propositions. I'm going to save those people if I have to break into the White House by a window like a suffragette. Besides, I've got the five thousand dollars, too, and no thanks to you. And I know somebody who will help me save those poor wretches, too!"

Old Jacob had heard her tirade out in far more admiration than indignation. He loved her energy and her determination and her fervor; her disrespect was a minor matter. But when she announced that she had found the money he was startled, and wanted to know where and how.

She laughed bitterly and would not tell him. When a clock tinkled once she started like Cinderella at midnight. And when she saw that it was already half past ten she fled down the great stairway like another Cinderella returning to rags and ashes. But she made the descent without losing a slipper.

Her father called to her down Jacob's Ladder, but she did not stay to answer. She opened the big door herself while the old footman gasped, "Why, Miss Muriel!" She hurried along the street, and when no taxi was to be found hopped aboard a down-bound 'bus and so reached Thirty-fourth Street, where she took a taxi from the Waldorf-Astoria cab-stand and told the driver to fly to Bellevue Hospital.

Her appointment with Dr. Worthing was for ten o'clock. At eleven o'clock she was still fuming among

the various entrances of the linked structures that are Bellevue.

At last she found a desk where a young woman sat back of a legend, "Information." Muriel asked for Dr. Worthing, please; and for her name she gave the phrase, "He's expecting me."

Muriel was led into a small room and invited to sit down. In a moment Dr. Worthing was at the door. She did not recognize him at first, for he was not in his white uniform. He was in a blue serge suit, wore yellow shoes, and carried a straw hat in his hand. He greeted her with a despairing smile that was rebuke enough. She rose and stood before him like a school-girl who is tardy.

"I'm so ashamed!" she said. "But you can't imagine how hard it was to get away. I had to run for it."

"So long as you're here," said Dr. Worthing, "that's enough. Let me look at the wounded forehead."

"Oh no, thanks; it's quite all right."

"Sit down," he said.

She sat down with a gasp of delighted disgust at her submissiveness. When his hand brushed back her hair she quivered again and her face was suddenly all rosy. Yet where his fingers went they left white streaks.

It startled Dr. Worthing to see what influence he had over her. He was of the sort who grow meek with power. He took off the adhesive strip with the aid of benzine. It hurt her a little, but him more.

"It's practically healed already!" he cried. "What splendid health you have! You must have a good father and mother." That was in his eyes a final diploma. Every day he saw poor souls condemned to carry inherited burdens with inherited weaknesses and to endure pain and blame they had not earned. Perfect health was to him as high a commendation as perfect beauty was to Perry Merithew.

Muriel exclaimed, "That's a funny thing to say!"

"Is it?" he said, and, instead of explaining, asked, ironically, "Aren't they good people?"

"Of course they are; though my father can be terribly stubborn. Yesterday he dragged me home and this morning I had to run away."

She felt a surprising necessity for telling this strange young man all that had happened after she left him. And she felt an irresistible impulse to demand his aid. She showed him the five thousand dollars and, against her overridden judgment, told him that she had danced it out of Perry Merithew.

He listened with fascination to her story and his eyes softened as she revealed her pity and her eagerness to help. But when the name of Merithew came to ear the coda spoiled the whole symphony for him. The knowledge that she knew the notorious rake and was rash enough to dance in his embrace and to accept money from him filled Worthing with a terror for her in which jealousy was a potent chemical. He could not believe that Muriel was as bad as rumor made all the rich. Even if she were, he was a doctor, not a minister, and it was not his business to convert her. But he was gravely disquieted.

She asked him if he could go with her to see Happy Hanigan, and he said that he could—he "happened" to be off duty. He did not explain that he had happened it by bullying and bribing another young and very sleepy surgeon to stay on duty a couple of hours longer.

Muriel had kept the taxi and they got into it. As they left the hospital Muriel caught sight of the clock.

"We must go first to the poor Italians and leave this money. Poor Happy Hanigan can wait awhile."

"He's waited several years," said Dr. Worthing. "And he's willing to wait many more. But those Italians—don't you think that five thousand dollars is a good deal to give them?"

"But that's what the Black Hand demands."

"Never pay the asking-price for anything. Bargain with 'em."

"But they'll hurt the boy."

"Not while there's money in sight. If you give them the five thousand right away they'll hold back the child and ask a thousand more. Or they'll steal him again. No, the kidnappers mustn't learn of the rich woman back of this or they'll never give up. They'll steal you! Start with five hundred and keep them anxious."

Muriel yielded to him, though her father's use of the same arguments had horrified her.

The Angelilli had given Muriel up for lost. They greeted her now with cries of redemption. They recoiled from the doctor, till Muriel assured them that he was not a detective, and he proved it by expert advice on the harnessing, feeding, and ventilating of the two infants who were uncle and nephew.

It struck Muriel as droll that this young man should be teaching a grandmother how to raise babes, but he knew more than they did. He knew, for instance, that boiled cabbage and fried pork were not good for infants. Settlement-house women had told them the same thing and been disliked for it. But a handsome young doctor was different.

Dr. Worthing told the awe-smitten women that he was there to get them their boy, that he could raise eight hundred dollars, if necessary, but they had better start at five hundred.

They accepted him as oracle, and Muriel made ready to take that inflammable money from her pocketbook. Dr. Worthing gave her a look and a slight shake of the head. He handed Gemma his own card and telephone number, and told her to let him know when the kidnappers were ready to exchange the boy for the money.

His cold manner quieted the hysteria of the women

where Muriel's warm sympathy had aggravated it, and farewells were said in good order.

Out in the tenement hall Dr. Worthing said:

"I must apologize for taking the wheel out of your hand, but I don't want you mixed up in this. It might entangle you in no end of trouble."

"You're wonderfully kind," said Muriel, "and I'm awfully grateful. Will you take the money?"

She offered him the five thousand dollars. He shook his head.

"I'd probably abscond."

"Please take it."

But he would not. She posed him a new problem.

"If we get the boy at a bargain do we give back the rest to Mr. Merithew?"

Worthing had hated the idea of her taking money from such a man, yet he could not quite like the idea of returning any of it to him. He had an idea:

"Better put it into a general fund for the relief of human misery. Call it the Merithew endowment, and see how far it will go."

"What a perfectly corking scheme!" Muriel cried. "We'll just do it. And now for poor little Happy."

They climbed the stairs and knocked at the Hanigan portal a long while before they brought to the opposite door a Greek lady who did not at all resemble the classic canons in any of her proportions. She informed them that Mrs. Hanigan was out scrubbing; Mr. Hanigan was with the horse, and the poor boy had gone to work selling his papers.

"With all his bruises!" Muriel sighed.

"There's no rest for the poor," said Worthing.

"And now for the poor Balinsky family," said Muriel. "What if we should be too late and they should have been sent away? It would kill them all; I'm sure of it. Hurry, hurry!"

"I'm afraid I haven't time to go to Ellis Island. I'm expected back at the hospital."

"You wouldn't desert me now, would you?" Muriel pleaded.

After one look into her eyes Worthing exclaimed, "I'd rather desert my job," and they clattered down the stairs together.

CHAPTER XVII

AT the new Barge Office, for all its Italian palace architecture, the crowd was made up chiefly of yesterday's American citizens gathered to welcome to-morrow's.

Always they keep coming out of the ocean as through the walled waters of the Red Sea, these fugitives to Canaan from Pharaohs of the old Egypts where they have wearied of making bricks without straw. We cannot see what milk and honey they find flowing here, yet they send back tidings that bring others through. So they must be escaping from something to something.

It was not easy for Muriel to feel sympathy for these uncouth, half-baked Americans. The snobbery of her class and the snobbery of one race for all others impelled her to dislike their faces, their clothes, their gestures, their dialects. Yet the poor souls were here for the best of reasons, and emotions of love and filial piety and marital devotion and comradeship were their inspiration. They had made heroic sacrifices and were revealing heroic loyalties.

At length the free municipal ferry came into its slip, loaded like a barge with the latest dredge from the ooze of Europe, and spilled the bucket-load on the dump-heap of New York. Strange creatures (almost grotesquer fish than those in the Aquarium) came out with the rest. Bewildered men like bearded children, bulging women shawled and hooded and ticketed and laden with luggage, including the children of last year and next.

They were so cattle-stupid one almost expected them

to moo or baa. But vacuous sheep faces suddenly leaped to radiance at a cry of welcome from some unforgotten voice. Madonnas of patience turned to mænads of joy at the sight of a husband or a son. Americanized fathers stared down at foreign lads whom they had left at home as babes at breast. Foreign lads stared up and retreated into their mothers' skirts before the onslaught of strangers who seized their mothers and were seized by them in frantic embrace.

The chaos of reunions was beautiful as few things are beautiful in this world, and Muriel's snobbery fled before the human cry.

But there were not reunions enough to go round. To some of those who had waited on shore the ferry brought no kinfolk. Some of those from the boat found no one to welcome them, and they stared in awe at the vast crags of Mount Babel piled up ahead of them.

Muriel saw two or three of the youngest of the women to whom a cab-driver was proffering his cab. He caught their cards from their hands and deciphered the addresses. Muriel wondered if they would go with him. She felt vaguely afraid for them. Then a woman wearing a badge marked "Travelers' Aid Society" joined the group, took the tickets from the cab-driver, and said something to him that led him to clamber to the box and drive away. Then she took charge of the strangers as if she were the very goddess of hospitality. Here Muriel seemed to see another angel feather. Even the sheep were protected.

The boat was about to return to Ellis Island and Worthing led Muriel aboard. There was such a stampede that he had to take her arm to help her. They made to the upper deck and stared down at the crowd. These were the anxious wretches whose relatives had not come ashore.

These were prodigal sons who had run away, prospered on husks, and sent for their parents to come out and take

their fatted calf in the prodigal's home. These were husbands who had built a nest in foreign woods and signaled their mates to migrate.

As Muriel's eyes wandered about the shabby personages of romance she found the sight more epical than all the grandeurs of the harbor, except the vast woman that upholds the torch of liberty, and keeps the ideal visible by day and at night alight. Soon she caught sight of a little man clinging to the ferry gate and straining straight ahead.

"That's Mr. Balinsky," she told Worthing.

"Poor dog!" said Worthing. "You can see that he's the kind that gets all the kicks and tin cans and never bites anybody."

Balinsky was pressed against the forward end of the railing and leaning forward with the wooden eagerness of a figurehead. Now and then his throat worked and he flung his gaze upward. At length he saw Muriel, stared, recognized her. He tried to smile and pulled his hat from his head and stood nodding. He was too shy to call to her, but in his eyes were prayers, and folded hands and genuflection.

"Poor fellow! Poor fellow!" Muriel sighed. "I've got to help him. I've just got to."

Ahead of them now was the little island with the big buildings, the sieve where nearly a million immigrants a year were sifted and the discarded thousands sent back branded as unfit for the high privileges and hard struggles of life in these United States.

As the ferry swam into its berth a tug was just about to depart. A clamor of shrieks and appeals broke from it and there were signs of a riot on board. Men in uniform were struggling with men and women.

As one of the ferry hands passed her, Muriel checked him to ask what the trouble might be. He answered, drearily:

"That's only the tug taking the deported ones back to

the steamships they came over on, Miss. It happens all the time. They get sore when they find out this is as near as they'll get to New York after traveling three thousand miles or so. They hate to go back, but there ain't no use tryin' to buck the whole United States gov'ment.

"The other day one of the women went that wild she thrun her own baby at the inspector's head. Only yesterday a young girl jumped overboard. She'd come from Servia to meet her sweetheart, and he never met her. They sent him telegrams, but he never come. He may have died or something. But she wanted to stay and look for him. She'd lost her trunk, though, and hadn't a penny, and she'd nothing on earth but the clothes was on her, so they wouldn't let her through. So she tried to drowned herself. But they boat-hooked her out, and back she had to go. Yes, ma'am, it's tough luck, but so many of them gets it we grow used to it."

The tug puffed by with its miserable freight like an old slave-ship, and Muriel stared after it in helpless awe. Then she was shaken almost off her feet as the ferry jolted into its slip. Dr. Worthing supported her, and they followed the crowd scurrying to the waiting-room.

Balinsky had hung back to greet Muriel. He held his hat in both hands and bowed and bowed with the appeasing smile of one whom the great had always treated with contempt or violence. She stared at him in wonderment a moment, then that impulsive hand of hers shot out to him.

He dropped his hat to the ground and seized her hand in both of his. He was not quite sure what to do with it. Muriel laughed a little nervously and extracted it. He bent and fumbled for his hat, stepped on it, seized it, rubbed it on his elbow, and clapped it on his head, all in a panic.

Muriel said, "Mr. Balinsky, this is Dr. Worthing."

Balinsky snatched down his hat again and began to duck, mumbling:

"Much obliged to meet you, Dr. Voiteen."

He was so whipped out, so craven before the mercilessness of the world, that there was nothing noble about him except his agony. Dr. Worthing lifted his hat to that. Agony was the doctor's most respected foe.

Balinsky turned at once to Muriel: "You come get me mine vife beck? Yes? And mine Rachel, too? Yes?"

"Yes," Muriel faltered, her confidence shaken by the sight of that tug full of doomed.

They wandered through the great depot of human freight. Barge-loads of new-comers from a vessel at anchor outside were being run through a long alley. At either end of it stood a doctor in uniform rolling up eyelids, ordering tongues thrust out, and examining scalps and hands, then marking the subject with a bit of blue chalk. Some they passed along, others they turned aside for further scrutiny, scratching an "X" upon their sleeves if their sanity were questioned, a "P" if their physical equipment were suspicious.

The sheep came bounding through into the rich pastures to be registered and ticketed, their friends found or telegraphed for, their safety assured by the government or by charitable societies.

The unlucky, the goats, were sent bleating into pens where they would be stripped and studied, peered over and cross-examined with relentless care—for the good of the nation.

It is a little daily Judgment Day on earth, admitting some to paradise, rebuffing others back to purgatory. It terrified Muriel. She began to be afraid that the world was too big for her.

Balinsky stared at the ordeal. He had gone through it once. Also he had brought his wife and daughter through it, and known twice the fearsome suspense and the after exultation. Now he was as one who had brought his

family into heaven, only to be told that his beloved were there by mistake and must be thrust out and down into hell.

From the line came loud shouts of greeting, and a man with all his family assailed Balinsky. Evidently they were friends of his. They had escaped the Russian knout and saber and now they had slipped past the American portcullis. They were in a picnic mood and the father cuffed Balinsky with ursine hilarity. Then he must have asked after the welfare of the wife and daughter, for abruptly Balinsky's bravery collapsed and he began to sob and shake his head. In a moment happiness had fled and they all stood about in dismay. Then as if he feared that bad luck was contagious, the father of the new flock herded them anxiously away from Balinsky toward the boat for shore.

To the deserted Balinsky came a woman wearing a badge, and Balinsky turned to her with frantic volubility. She tried to quiet him, but she was plainly troubled. Balinsky dragged her to Muriel and Dr. Worthing and introduced her by a Russian name that Muriel did not catch.

She spoke with the briskness a business woman adopts, even if her business is charity. Her English was good and only her intonation and the sounding of certain letters betrayed her foreign origin.

"I am the representative of the Council of Jewish Women," she explained. "They keep me here to do what can be done for these poor souls. I can't do everything they want, but I know what they suffer. I was at Kishinev when the great pogrom took place. My father and mother were butchered by the *Chernaya Sotnia*, the Black Hundreds. I was a young girl. I just escaped the massacre—or worse. The persecution goes on still in a thousand ways. *Ach*, these poor Balinskys! I knew Rachel when she was a little girl. She was pretty, and still is; and very good, and still is. She has suffered

enough to have driven anybody mad. Who knows what will happen to her when she gets back penniless, out of her mind, with a sick mother? Her father must not go back. They would jail him or kill him. It is too bad, but what can we do?"

"She must not go!" cried Muriel. "I won't let her go."

Balinsky stared at her as at a rescuing angel, but the other woman smiled sadly:

"The law is very strict. The officers are nearly as strict."

"What do I care about the law?" Muriel stormed. "All the other laws are broken—for graft or to protect criminals. Why not break a law once in a while to save some poor child?"

"Have you seen the Commissioner?"

Muriel shook her head.

"You'd better talk to him." She turned to Worthing. "You are a doctor?"

He nodded.

"You might say that you are Balinsky's doctor. That gives you the right to see the girl. You might get her before a board of special inquiry. You might succeed in an appeal; but the law is very plain, and there are so many just like her. Last year nearly a hundred girls just like her were sent back; they were insane or feeble-minded.

"The worst crime of the Balinskys is their poverty. Our society is very poor, too—the hard times, you know. And charity is the first luxury people can afford to do without."

After a certain amount of trouble Muriel's card, on which she ventured to write "daughter of Jacob Schuyler, Esq.," got her into the sanctum of the Assistant Commissioner. It was not hard for him to be gracious to so pretty a member of so powerful a family. But he checked

her impetuous raid on his heart by telling her that her father's secretary, Mr. Chivot, and he had talked the whole matter over, and that he was afraid the law must take its course. Good laws were bound to seem cruel at times, but they were for the general welfare.

Muriel had a woman's distaste for such frozen phrases as "the general welfare" and "the public weal." They were to her but screens for countless little cruelties. She could see the tremendous city across the bay, and she could not believe that it could be imperiled by one poor demented girl.

She remembered what Maryla had said: "It is not meant that the law should kill three good people who work hard," and also she recalled that watchword of action, "If you don't, who will?"

Muriel turned all her eloquence on the Commissioner, but he could only repeat that he was powerless, and that officers are paid to administer the laws, not to criticize them.

"Do you remember Max Jukes?" he asked.

"I don't think I ever met him," said Muriel.

"Probably not. He died in 1802. He was just a poor, old, demented wretch, but he had a lot of children. Scientists have traced his descendants and found over a thousand of them defectives, degenerates, or criminals whom the State of New York has had to take care of. He has cost the state a good deal more than a million dollars up to now and there's no end in sight. The defectives we already have are costing this country a hundred million dollars every year. We can't afford to let any more in, can we?"

He thought that this would convince her, but she answered with feminine logic:

"Well, since you're spending so much, a little more won't be noticed."

"Oh, Lord!" groaned the Assistant Commissioner.

Dr. Worthing saved the day by asking if he might not

examine the girl as a physician retained by her friends. The Assistant Commissioner consented.

Rachel Balinsky and her mother were already in the custody of the deporting division. The wretches who are detained in this limbo of wanhope have less than no political influence, and their claims upon the money of the government or the interest of the statesmen are so slight that disgraceful conditions were permitted to continue.

Nearly two thousand of these ambiguous citizens of nowhere were held at this time for various reasons. The lucky few slept upon iron beds without mattresses and often without springs and covering. The majority slept upon the bare stone floors.

In one room they passed Muriel saw three hundred men and boys, old and young, good and bad, criminals and insane. The women's quarters were of the same quality, only the prisoners were more pitiful. Some of them were brazen and offered to flirt Dr. Worthing out of Muriel's possession. The reasons for their deportation were plain. Muriel was not educated to the post-graduate height of being sorry for them.

The feeble-bodied mother Balinsky and her feeble-minded daughter were brought forward, and the mother came hastening with a new fever of hope. The daughter was not anxious, not troubled at all. She had her own merry thoughts and snickered to herself over her secret amusements.

Her weird humor sent Muriel's blood to ice. She was afraid of her, with all the shuddering dread of the young for those whom a younger world believed to be filled with devils.

But Dr. Worthing was not afraid, and Muriel was extravagantly impressed by his gentle forcefulness, the searching scholarship of his eyes.

He led the mother aside and talked to her. She flushed and stammered and what she told seemed to stir

Worthing out of his calm. On his set jaws little muscles worked and white flashes alternated with red. At length he came back to Muriel and murmured:

"We'd better go now."

"Is there no hope?" Muriel sighed.

He shook his head. "Better tell them good-by."

Balinsky had caught the question "no hope?" and the answer.

He began tearing at his beard and at his hair, gnawing his wrists and the backs of his hands, and snarling as if he would destroy himself. He was trying to keep from shrieking aloud. His wife ran to him to quiet him. Even Rachel ceased giggling and tried to soothe her father as if he were a doll.

Muriel was overwhelmed by her failure; her lips whitened, her eyes glazed. She would have broken down and wept madly, but Dr. Worthing led her out into the sea-air and tried to comfort her. She leaned against him for strength.

"You must get away from here at once," he insisted. "It's no place for you. You aren't meant for such scenes."

"If they can stand them, I can," she answered, clenching all her muscles. "I'm as strong as anybody. I'm not going to give up. The poor souls! There's no hope, then?"

"I don't know," he said. "There might be."

"Then why in Heaven's name did you tell them there wasn't any?" she demanded.

"They've been fooled often enough. If we can save them, that will be time enough to tell them. But to raise their hopes again—no."

"What do you plan to do?"

"See the Commissioner. I don't believe the girl's really insane. It's just a collapse of nerves. She had a horrible experience in Russia—I can't tell you what it was, but—well, there's one Russian officer I'd like to

vivisect. The girl tried to kill him. I wish she had. But she had to be kept in hiding in a dark cellar for months, with almost no food. And she and her old mother walked a hundred miles by night, hiding by day, and got across the frontier in disguise, and made the journey to the sea, and crossed in the steerage in stormy weather; they were battened in for eight days. They got to New York at last. When Rachel met her father in the sunlight and liberty, she almost died of joy. But the city was so big it overwhelmed her with its crowds and its richness. She tried to learn the new language, keep up the pace. And then the hard times came; her father lost his job. She worked day and night in a smothering little room and had nothing much to eat. So finally she went into nervous bankruptcy. Who wouldn't? The wonder is that she is alive. If she had rest and good food and some relief from terror she'd come out all right, I'm sure. If they ship her back to Russia she'll die."

"I can give her food and rest," Muriel cried. "I'll get her out to the country. She shall have everything, everything. If only we can get her away from this hideous place!"

"That's the problem."

They went back to the Commissioner. Dr. Worthing told what he had learned from the girl's mother; what he believed about her condition. The law permits an alien with a mental defect to be deported without recourse, but since Muriel Schuyler stood sponsor for her, the Commissioner consented to forward an appeal. He could do nothing more than that, except to delay her deportation till the appeal was heard.

"And they won't go on that ship to-day?" Muriel asked.

"No; it will be some weeks, perhaps, before the appeal can be reached."

Suddenly the Commissioner, who had looked as fiendishly heartless as a Rhadamanthus, was transformed to a saint in Muriel's eyes. She had an impulse to hug him, but resisted it. She dragged Dr. Worthing back to the detention-room to tell Balinsky the good news. He was not there. On the floor in a huddle of abject surrender was his wife; at her side was Rachel, holding her fingers before her face and laughing at them.

Muriel ran to Mrs. Balinsky, knelt by her, and told her that she would not be taken that day, not for weeks, and if there were any justice on earth, not for ever.

The woman had no strength to be glad with. She mumbled a few words of the Jargon and feebly patted Muriel's hand.

"Where is your husband? I must tell him."

"Gone," she whispered.

Muriel ran to the slip. The ferry had just shoved out. She waved and called, but no one heard or saw her, least of all Balinsky, whom she could see bent upon the rail, his face in his crossed arms.

There was no way to overtake him or to reach shore save by the same boat on its next trip.

There was much time to kill, and Worthing and Muriel spent it in wandering about the island. Its buildings seemed like temples now, and the devoted workers in the hospitals and administration buildings seemed to be priests of a lofty creed. There was leisure for much talk with her companion. They were like two recruits happening to march at elbow through a great battle. Henceforth they were comrades.

It was the same world, the same things were happening in the same sky, buildings, streets, islands, and waterways; but the light had changed and the eyes that looked upon it all had changed. Therefore it was another world. So hell and heaven might be the same place, and serve both for damnation and paradise.

At last the ferry came and took them back to the city. On the boat were a few immigrants who had come through the ordeal and were expecting friends to meet them at the dock.

When they landed there was an anxious crowd waiting. It seemed the same crowd. There were the same Madonnas turned to mænads, the same fathers and children meeting as strangers, the same bewildered peasant girls drifting to the same polyglot cab-drivers and rescued by the same vigilance.

This country was but a shore, and the people waves, strangely alike for all their differences.

CHAPTER XVIII

FOUR sewing-machines were simmering in a row with a murmur of many kettles drumming under dancing lids. In a corner an ancient white-bearded sempster was making long stitches by hand, the needle dipping to the cloth, then stretching far away, like a swan drinking.

Dogged fatigue bent the necks of all the workers but one; and her a keener distress than fatigue tormented into tossing her head and tossing her eyes upward till they were but white lines of despair.

A geranium in the window chimed one little velvet tone. And the girl's face was lifted on the stem of its throat with the same wistful beauty. Her beauty was as poignant and as alien and as trite as the Miserere from "Il Trovatore" which a street-piano was shattering forth on the pavement below for children to dance to.

Like a marquise in rags dumped in a tumbrel for the guillotine, fate seemed to have this girl in a cart jouncing down the road to an ugly end. Her feet that plied the iron treadle were exquisitely out of place and her hands exquisitely inappropriate to the wheel.

Her feet plied the treadle incessantly, and incessantly under her silken hands flowed rough fabrics like a little brook that passed under the stabbing needle and fell to the floor in a cataract.

Her fingers, lifted now and then to thrust back from her hot forehead an encroaching tendril of her umber hair, paused at times to pluck at her throat and push aside the light waist, laying bare a beauty that was pitiful; for it would have honored Orient pearls to lie there.

Here was the beggar maid ready to grace a throne. But where was her Cophetua? She seemed to dream him and await him; for the eyes she cast about the dingy tenement ached with revulsion and closed again upon their own visions.

Young, beautiful, clean, lovable, she glowed among the débris of squalor, a flame in ashes. It was midsummer in the year, but just spring in her soul. Yet she sat and sewed from early morning till late at night.

She was not sewing upon delicate fabrics for herself or for other beautiful women. She sewed upon rough, cheap wear for rough, cheap men. She sewed in the stifling-hot room, and the sweat of toil and of heat beaded on her forehead and on her neck and dropped on her hands.

All the rest of the Sokalski family worked likewise—the decrepit grandfather in the corner, the father at the sewing-machine, the mother when she was not at the stove, the plump little sister Dosia, and the boarder Pasinsky who shared their two rooms and their two meals with them.

The new labor laws had rendered the old sweatshops untenable; the factory regulations and inspections were so strict now that the shoddier manufacturers preferred to give out piece-work to be done at home. Now it was not necessary to pay foremen to drive these people. It was not necessary to pay for overtime or night-work. These wretches in the eternal contest with rent and food drove themselves and wrought on till they dropped.

The Sokalskis were what is known as "pants-finishers." The father, Adam Sokalski, made trips to the shop, staggering under a load of "completed garments," and came away staggering under a load of "cut-outs." His wife, Rosa Sokalska, cooked and sewed, alternately regretting that she could not do both at once.

They worked usually without talk. To-day when they spoke at all they spoke of poor Balinsky, whose lot was worse than theirs. Adam, who was very religious, used

Balinsky for a moral, and said how glad they should all be that they were together, while Balinsky's home was wrecked. He said that God was good to them and they should be grateful.

Maryla said nothing, but she swept the room with bitter eyes and smiled bitterly at the long seam she was making.

They spoke of the fine lady who had promised her help and ridden away in the beautiful car. But she had not come back. No doubt by now poor Rachel and her mother were on the steamer that was to take them to the Russian Gehenna.

Rosa, Adam's wife and Maryla's mother, thought that Balinsky should be invited to live with them. There was room for one more cot. He could pay something, which would help them, and he could save something, which would help him.

Maryla's nostrils stiffened with resentment, but still she said nothing. It was not pleasant to work and eat and sleep and dress and live in these two rooms with a father, a grandfather, and the boarder, Pasinsky, who loved her. After all, the addition of one more would make little difference.

And then a lean hand clacked like a skeleton's at the door and Michal Balinsky came in. Mrs. Sokalska was at the stove, and he sank on her chair. He answered the questioning eyes with a flopping motion of his arms, and they knew from his attitude that he had been unable to rescue his family from the government.

"I couldn't vait to see dem tooked by das schiff. I could not do it. *Ach, du lieber Gott!*"

His head rolled with sickly dizziness on his gaunt shoulders and he would have slid from his chair, but Rosa ran to him and gathered him up, saying:

"You should lay down once, Michal."

She lifted him and supported him into the next room and lowered him to a cot that was there by a window

opening on a court. She offered to make him "*ein Tässchen Thee*," but he shook his head and closed his eyes, and she left him. She did not notice that a pair of long, sharp shears lay on the window-sill at his hand.

She went back to work and the sewing-machines simmered again. The oldster's hand rose and dipped like a black swan's neck. Adam hunched over his machine and pedaled like a spent bicycle-racer on the sixth day. Rosa's fat legs waddled at her treadles and she puffed hard, rising now and then to go to the stove and make a clatter that fretted the weary laborers. Plump little Dosia sewed and listened to the racket from the street, and Henryk Pasinsky, the boarder, glanced at the beauty of Maryla, who sewed and sighed inaudibly, pausing now and then to beat her breast as if to pound down the rebellion smoldering there.

There were no other sounds, just the whir, whir, whir of the machines, the squeal of rusty treadles, and the discouraged squeaks of a shabby canary hopping from perch to perch in its little cage.

Later there was an unusual noise in the streets as two push-cart peddlers disputed a strip of curb, and in that extra din nobody heard the short grunt and the low moan of Balinsky as he pressed the shears against his side and rolled over upon them, burying his mouth in the blanket to smother his anguish.

By and by there was an unfamiliar knock at the door, the machines stopped whirring, and the toilers looked at one another a moment before Rosa called, "*Herein!*"

The door opened and Muriel stood at the sill; behind her was young Worthing.

"I beg your pardon," said Muriel.

Maryla rose to her feet and Pasinsky stood up respectfully. Muriel recognized Maryla and smiled.

"Isn't this Miss Sokalska? I'm Miss Schuyler. I met you yesterday. I'm sorry to break in on you without

warning, but we went to Mr. Balinsky's home in Batavia Street and he had gone. They told us he might be here. I was so anxious to get word to him that they aren't going to send his wife and daughter away."

This good news was too stunning for speech. The starers only stared a little harder. Rosa sat down and Adam rose quickly.

"Dey dun't sendet Rachel and Miriam avay now?" Rosa fluttered.

"No," said Muriel. "They've granted us an appeal. She won't go for weeks, and she won't go at all if we can help it. Dr. Worthing and I—this is Dr. Worthing; you have him to thank for it. And he thinks the girl will get well. Don't you, Dr. Worthing?"

Dr. Worthing nodded.

Rosa lifted herself to her feet, beating her palms together, and stumbled into the other room, crying:

"Michal! Michal! Dey dun't gone yet; dey dun't gone never, maybe."

And then she screamed and fled backward, gaping. She could not speak. She could only stammer and point with a shivering hand.

After the first hubbub of terror Dr. Worthing took charge of the panic-filled home. He rolled the bleeding wretch to his other side, drew the shears from the wound, cut away the clothes and, catching the flesh in his strong fingers, checked the hemorrhage.

He cast his eyes on the palsied little mob crowding about him, ordered them away with a rough "Get out and stay out." Then he hesitated a moment before he called:

"Oh, Miss Schuyler!"

"Yes," she answered from the other room.

"Would you mind— Do you think you could help me a moment?"

"Certainly," she said, as she came to the door.

"Are you—are you plucky enough to hold this—like this?"

"I'll—I'll try," she said, weakly.

"It's to save a life or I wouldn't ask you."

"Of course," she panted.

He showed her how to squeeze the severed arteries. She peeled off her gloves, set her jaws, and obeyed him. He whipped off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, wrote a few words on a piece of paper, and sent Dosia flying to the nearest drug-store; then he sent Rosa scurrying for hot water and salt, and Maryla for bandages, while he scoured his own hands with relentless violence.

Muriel watched him as he went about his task, and his concise methods fascinated her so that she forgot to faint. How amazing it was that she should be here in this place ministering to this poor Jew whose side was pierced as with a spear!

Eventually Dosia returned with the druggist himself, Mr. Pytlik, who was also a trained nurse and occasional physician. He brought sterilized gauze and adhesive plasters, stimulants and antiseptics and a case of instruments. He offered to take Muriel's place, and Dr. Worthing dismissed her with a word of praise:

"Thank you, and—my congratulations."

Muriel bowed and turned for the door. The prop of necessity was gone and she made a toper's effort to walk a chalk-line. She got to the other room, whispering almost inaudibly, "I never fainted in my life and I'm not going to now."

But Maryla, seeing by her face that she was about to wilt, ran and caught her, thrust a chair against her knees, and hastened for the vinegar-cruet. Muriel bent her head forward almost to her knees and the blood came back to her. She bullied herself into resistance and put off Maryla's ministrations with a grateful smile.

"Thank you, I'm all right now. I mustn't be a silly coward," she said. "What's a little blood?"

"You are tairrible brave," said Maryla. "I would have run away, me."

"Thank you," said Muriel, surprised at the tribute and the amount of comfort it gave her.

From force of habit Maryla sat down at her sewing-machine. She was almost always there. There was always work to do. Automatically her feet began to plod the old treadmill, her hands to slide the fabric forward. She looked back to Muriel and apologized: "Excuse it, please." Adam had settled back to his task as soon as the doctor took charge of Balinsky. He had dragged Dosia back to her machine and Pasinsky had returned to his. With sly glances he seemed to be comparing Muriel and Maryla—to Maryla's advantage. The old man, short-sighted, deaf, and senile, had known nothing of the turmoil. He continued to stitch as if he were hastening to finish his own shroud. Muriel wondered how he kept from sewing his own beard to it.

Muriel, to drown the noises from the other room, cast about for a topic of conversation; she could do no better than:

"Pretty hot day, isn't it?"

"Tairrible," said Maryla.

"Too hot for you to be working here."

This almost brought a smile to Maryla. As if the weather had anything to do with it! Muriel tried to be gracious.

"I suppose you'd rather finish your work now so that you can have the cool of the evenings free."

Maryla smiled patiently. "My rather is what I do not get. By night, too, we work."

"Really?" said Muriel. "It must be all the better when Sunday comes. Central Park is beautiful now, isn't it? Do you go there often?"

"Ah! Tsentral Park. Oh yes, I go by Tsentral Park in my own texikeb." She laughed till she saw that Muriel was puzzled at her irony. Irony is impolite. She

dropped it. "Never did I see that Park yet. It is too much for a walking. It takes helf a day, and ten cents it costs to go by street-cars."

"What's ten cents?" Muriel exclaimed before she realized how it might sound here.

"Ten cents means much sewing, much aching; ten cents is dinner for us all."

"You've never seen Central Park? You've never been up-town?" Muriel cried.

Maryla shook her head as if answering the foolish questions of a child. Muriel could not endure the dogged drudgery and the silence broken only by the sounds from the next room, the groans of Balinsky and the business of the doctor.

"And what are you sewing?" Muriel asked.

"Pents."

Maryla had to repeat it before the wondering Muriel recognized it as a word she hated. The more hateful it seemed to her that so fine a woman as Maryla should devote her days and nights and her eyes and her soul to such manufacture.

Dr. Worthing came in now with Mr. Pytlik. He had finished repairing the rent in Balinsky's side so far as he could do it. The rest of the work was Balinsky's. Mr. Pytlik was loud in praise of the young surgeon:

"He done fine! Never a finer voik I seen it, no, not by clinics."

Mr. Pytlik hurried away to fill some prescriptions. Dr. Worthing called for more water, and Rosa filled a basin at the faucet and held it for him. While he scoured his blood-stained arms and hands he told her how to care for Balinsky. He had given him the tonic of hope, and she must convince him that his Miriam and his Rachel would be restored to him. Muriel added her vow that it should be accomplished.

Muriel continued to study Maryla furtively. The

Polish girl was so remote, so utterly unlike herself, that there could be no sense of rivalry, no excuse for that instant jealousy of one woman for another.

To Muriel Maryla's presence here seemed a crime. The very fact of being a flower gave her a right to a spot in a garden. It is the right and the business of flowers to decorate the light.

Muriel felt one of those impulses of hers coming on. She rose and went to the machine and stopped Maryla's hand at the wheel.

"Do you know what I'm going to do with you?" said Muriel.

"No, ma'am," said Maryla.

"I'm going to bundle you into that taxicab downstairs and take you for a good long ride."

Maryla laughed. Angels do not happen nowadays.

"I mean it," Muriel insisted.

Even there and even then that woman's first protest was, "But I got nothing to wear."

Muriel wanted to cuff her ears, but she said, "It's a closed taxicab and nobody can see you. But you can see everybody."

Maryla shook her head. Her mother and Dosia assailed her with protests. They would doubtless have been glad to go along, but Muriel did not feel quite up to that Samaritan sublimity. Even Adam nodded his consent.

Pasinsky rose and lifted Maryla from the chair and put his hands on his heart.

"Pleass—to pleass me. I esk you, I esk you."

Dr. Worthing, seeing that Muriel was in earnest, prescribed the outing for Maryla, and she consented. She brought forth a hat that was in good taste and of a simplicity that would have cost a lot of money in Paris. Also she slipped behind a calico hanging that served as a wardrobe and a boudoir and emerged in her other dress. She had made it herself and it became her.

Muriel went to tell Balinsky good-by. He looked like a wax effigy. As she promised him the salvation of his household a thin little worm of blood crawled through his cheek. He was down indeed, utterly dependent on help, a curious object to be causing the amount of trouble he was giving everybody; clogging the wheels of the government; taking the time of the busy; robbing the poor of their space and food and pence; and wringing the heart of the rich.

But it is well that the big ships should stop and turn about at the cry, "Man overboard!" no matter who or what the man, lest the habit of mercy be lost and love should cease to make the world go round.

CHAPTER XIX

THERE was no little excitement in Orchard Street when Maryla Sokalska stepped into the taxicab. The neighbors thought she must be arrested by detectives or, more fascinating still, was being carried away by a pair of those white-slave dealers who were so fashionable a sensation in all the newspapers for a year or two.

Maryla was something of a sensation to herself; but after the first few spine-snapping plunges of her first taxicab she settled back upon the cushions with a fair imitation of one who had been born in a taxicab. Most women are luxurious by nature and take to it at the first chance as incubator or hen-bred ducks take to the first water they can reach.

Dr. Worthing had to get out at Thirty-first Street. When Muriel asked him to finish the ride he answered:

"Do you want to lose me my job? It's probably gone already."

"You'd easily get another one," said Muriel, with adulation. "I'll call you up. We haven't seen Happy Hanigan yet."

"All telephone orders promptly filled," he said, and dropped to the ground.

How well acquainted they had become and how busy they had been together without working at all upon the original cause of their acquaintance! Happy was like a dissonant little chord by which a tune modulates into an entirely new key.

Maryla smiled to herself as Muriel stared after the form of Dr. Worthing striding through the crowd. If he

had been a young god vanishing into a thick mist she could hardly have admired him more. She did not realize how fervently she sighed.

"Isn't he wonderful?"

"Wanderfool!" said Maryla, and felt more at ease, seeing that even the great Miss Schuyler was ordinary clay.

The taxicab moved across to Fifth Avenue and on north. Maryla's pride kept her from expressing her excitement over the new country she was visiting. The gleaming Avenue with its wealth-choked sidewalks and windows filled her with a symphonic music. The shops, with the gowns, the hats, the jewels pleading to be bought and worn, sickened her with desire. When at length they reached the suave roads and green velvet of the Park it suffered by comparison with the windows. The Park was very beautiful, of course, and she would have reveled in it if she had not seen the shop windows first. They followed her in memory.

Woman-like, she had been able to see and to remember details extraordinarily. One glance at a complex gown left its every detail in her mind.

Riverside Drive, the heroic river, the lofty tomb of General Grant—all these things were fine, of course, but she saw them as through shop windows, darkly.

Muriel watched her and understood how much was mutely expressed in that passionate ardor of womankind for gorgeous things to put on and wear about.

Then it suddenly occurred to her that she had a fussy old father who was probably setting the police on her trail.

Muriel might have stopped at a drug-store and telephoned, but it would be quicker to run home in a taxicab. She could hardly dispossess Maryla so far north. She decided to take Maryla home with her.

The footman who had said, "Why, Miss Muriel!" when she ran out, now that she came back, said: "Oh, Miss Muriel! Your father's looking for you, Miss, and he's

scoured the town over for you. You're not hurt, are you?"

"No, but I want tea—tea for two. Then telephone Mr. Chivot that I'm home and ask him to find father and set his mind at rest."

Maryla was confounded almost to tears by the majesty of the Schuyler home, outside and inside. She sat meekly on the edge of a haughty chair, and when tea was brought by two servants in a little city of silver structures on a prairie of silver, she was so tremulous before the splendor that she could hardly hold her cup. Her cup and saucer fairly chattered like the teeth of fright.

But she did her best. Muriel was telling her about the excursion to Ellis Island and the priceless wisdom of Dr. Worthing. Maryla asked, mischievously:

"Is he your faller?"

"The idea!" Muriel stammered. "I only met him yesterday."

"Yesterday is enough," Maryla taunted, gaining new self-confidence at seeing the confusion of Muriel. Muriel denied the implication, but she did not resent it.

When the tea things were solemnly deported she wondered how she might further entertain her exotic visitor. An inspiration came to her:

"You have such taste in dress, Miss Sokalska. I wonder if you'd like to see my new frocks?"

She said this as Jacob would have asked another millionaire bibliophile if he would like to see his tall copy of the first folio of Shakespeare and his unique *Doctor Faustus*.

Maryla answered by rising instantly. Muriel led her up-stairs—led Maryla Sokalska up Jacob's Ladder! Muriel's maid was at the country place, and Muriel had the privilege of taking the gowns from the hangers herself. It was like showing off a fairy wardrobe, lifting out yards of rainbow, heaps of huge petals, and skeins of mist. As the old librarian reveled in

the pride of owning first editions and works with uncut leaves, so Maryla exulted in these unworn prophecies of fashion.

Maryla gave up her effort at an air of satisfied indifference. She was ravished at the beauty of the gowns, and said so. When Muriel went to a dress-closet to bring out her best, she glanced back and saw that Maryla was hugging one of the frocks to her breast, and nuzzling it with her cheek.

Muriel came back and said: "I'm glad you like that gown. I want to give it to you."

Maryla shook her head with doleful pride. Muriel pleaded with her. Maryla's final answer was, "Where could I wear it, now?"

She simply would not be bullied into accepting the charity even of such raiment. Muriel said, "You could wear it anywhere you would."

"I'm a woiking-goil," said Maryla in the cockney of New York.

"Even so," Muriel insisted, "you ought to work in nice things. You ought to be a dressmaker. If I got you a position as a sewing-woman up-town, would you accept it? You could earn ever so much more than you do by sewing on those—those horrid—pants!"

The idea appealed so strongly to Muriel that she picked up the telephone and called the number of one of her dressmakers.

"Is that you, Mr. Dutilh?" she said. "This is Miss Schuyler."

The answer came back: "Miss Schuyler! It's high time you were reporting. Why haven't you been in? The new importations are just arriving. There are several marvelous gowns you'll be sure to want."

"Hush, you robber! There's just one thing I want to-day. I want you to give a friend of mine a job—a job as sewing-woman."

When Miss Schuyler expressed a wish, it was to Mr.

Dutilh's profit to grant it at any cost. He could always slip the expense into the next bill.

"Anybody Miss Schuyler sends I'll employ, of course," said Mr. Dutilh.

"We'll be right down," said Miss Schuyler.

As they descended Jacob's Ladder, Jacob himself appeared at the foot of it and cut off their escape. He had just come in and just learned of Muriel's presence in the house.

As usual the torments of anxiety and aching love that had filled him while he thought her lost were instantly changed to rage when he found her safe. When we go on a wild-goose chase and return exhausted to find our pet at home our first desire is to wring the wild goose's neck. Jacob was so furious that Maryla's presence acted as no restraint.

"What in the name of all that's holy do you mean, Muriel, by scaring me to death like this? What's got into you that you go stampeding all over the place? I made Parny take me down to that awful hole you went to yesterday. I told him I'd fire him if he ever did again. I climbed the infernal stairs to that old Irish crone's kennel, and she said that 'never a know she knew of where you was, only that you'd been there while she was not within in the house.' Ugh! Then I went down to that Dago hole, and they didn't know your name, only that a beautiful angel had been there with a beautiful doctor.

"At the office Chivot told me that he'd had a telephone from the Assistant Commissioner at Ellis Island saying that you had turned the whole place upside down, defied the United States government, and started an appeal to Washington. He said you had a young doctor with you there, too—named Wordsworth or something.

"Who is this fellow? Where'd he come from? Where did you meet him? What's the matter with you, anyway? Have you gone insane?"

Maryla wanted to run, but she dared not pass the irate dragon. When her father stormed she cowered and obeyed. What would Muriel do?

Muriel sat down on the stairs and grinned from between the hands she rested her face in.

"You old darling, did you really miss me? You ought to have been a politician. You make a wonderful speech."

"How dare you! Your impudence is as shameless as your conduct!"

"Oh, Daddy dear, come on out of the Ark. In the first place, I'm of age, and, in the second, I've been on my best behavior. And not in half as much danger as if I'd been riding to the hounds. And I haven't spent a penny of your money—only Merry Perry's."

"Muriel!" he thundered, but she cooed with the insolent allure of a benevolent Circe.

"Now, Jacob, you know you never could scare me or bluff me. We'll be awfully good pals if you'll just be a nice man. You're giving Miss Sokalska an entirely wrong impression of you."

He was purpling with ire and his throat was swelling like an alligator's. She quelled him as she rose.

"I'm sounding my horn, Daddy—honk! honk! You won't get hurt if you stick to the sidewalk."

Then she marched down the stairs and swept past him. What can a father do nowadays? He may not spank or beat or imprison his daughters; his threats are idle. Jacob pivoted on his heels in a state of helpless rage and helpless recognition that she was a splendid girl and he was proud of her. He took refuge in sarcasm:

"Are you going to honor your mother and me with any more of your society or are you going to move to Chinatown?"

"Oh no, I'll go home with you in the yacht. I've got an engagement with Merry Perry."

"What!"

"I have got to report about his money."

"Oh, you have, have you?"

"Yes. I'll meet you at the yacht in half an hour. Come along, Miss Sokalska."

Maryla, left marooned on the stairway, stole down the steps and sidled round Jacob's bulk, like a cat getting past a bulldog. She followed Muriel out. Her head was full of new American ideas. In her home, her father, though he was only a slave chained to a sewing-machine, treated his women with patriarchal authority. But the great Jacob Schuyler was a mere child to his own child.

Muriel, little realizing what seeds of revolt she had put into the head of Maryla, led her on to yet greater danger —all with the most noble motives.

When Muriel walked into the Dutilh building with Maryla, they were just preceded by no less eminent a lady than Winnie Nicolls's mother under a hat of still greater eminence. For all her power, Mr. Dutilh greeted her with his usual extravagance of flattery and insult:

"My God! take off that lid. You're a sight. You never got that in my shop." He turned to Muriel. "She's a pretty woman, too, when she lets me pick out her things. But did you ever see such a bunch of tripe on a human head?"

Muriel was afraid to make any answer. Maryla was aghast at his impertinence, yet he was to be her rescuer from the treadmill.

He sold Muriel a gown before she could prevent him, and she had to close her eyes against the others he dangled before her.

Meanwhile he was taking note of Maryla, appraising her face, her figure. He called her to look at a hat, that he might see her walk. At length he said:

"My dear, you're far too pretty to be stuffed away in my sewing-room. You're worth a lot more to me out here than in there. How'd you like to be a model?"

"A model?" Maryla echoed, feebly.

"Yes; a manikin if you prefer. You just sit around here like those other lazy hussies." He indicated a number of languorous countesses dawdling about. "When a customer comes in you put on the gown I tell you to, and simply walk up and down and show it off. Then some fat old cow thinks she'll look as well in it as you do. And we make a sale. How does that strike you? What?"

It struck Maryla as a gift from Heaven. To spend her days putting on costumes like the woven dreams she saw about her, and to go sauntering back and forth in them for a few hours a day, and to earn far more so than by pedaling the sewing-machine up an eternal hillside—this was heaven already.

She accepted and promised to report for duty the next morning.

Mr. Dutilh had done a double stroke of policy. He had secured for himself a needed employee and he had secured the rapturous gratitude of Muriel Schuyler.

Muriel sent Maryla home in a taxicab, paying the driver in advance what he liberally estimated as the clock-distance.

Then she went to the yacht to pacify her father, serene in the consciousness that she had done a good day's work. She could not have dreamed into what a whirlpool she had led the feet of Maryla.

While Muriel was transplanting Maryla to Dutilh's garden her father was busy on his own account, and he executed a master-stroke with the aid of the telephone.

Muriel reached the yacht as she promised, and apologized for her unfilial behavior, blaming it on a higher duty. Jacob accepted the overtures, and peace was concluded. After the hot and eager day, the wind on the water was a benediction, and the sight of the bay at home with its flock of yachts gliding or at rest was blessed.

But when the anchor splashed there was no preparation for going ashore. Instead, a launch put off from the dock

and conveyed aboard Muriel's mother and her maid, and Muriel's maid, and Jacob's man, and a deal of baggage.

"What's the meaning of all this?" said Muriel.

"We're going on a little cruise, my child," said Jacob, with an odious joviality.

"But I have an engagement ashore—I have stacks of engagements."

"They'll wait."

"How long?"

"Oh, we'll be back in a few weeks."

Her wild protests evoked only the hilarious laughter of her father and mother, who clung together like two fat pirates, shaken and shaking each other with unmannerly glee.

Muriel used all her weapons on her father: threats, prayers, tears, cajolings, but all in vain. If he had been vulnerable, her mother was not. She used all those weapons herself too much to yield to them.

Beaten at every point, Muriel meekly pleaded, "May I send a wireless or two at least?"

"You will send no wireless."

Muriel ordinarily could revel in a joke on herself, but the humor of being kidnapped by her own parents did not amuse her. It left too many serious interests too horribly involved. But she could not swim so far as the already receding shore.

Perry Merithew waited all evening at the Yacht Club for his dance with Muriel. His zealous anticipations sickened with delay. He did not dance with Pet Bettany or her mother, though they hovered in the offing like a couple of sinister submarines. He was afraid of them and wanted to take counsel with Muriel against them.

But Muriel did not come. At length he ventured to telephone her house, only to receive the baffling word that she had gone on a long cruise and had left no message for Mr. Merithew.

CHAPTER XX

PRETTY things! Pretty things to wear, to hear, to see, to read—fashion, melody, art, drama, literature. And fashion by far the most thrilling of them all to womankind.

What prayer have they, these womanly women, more fervent than this: to be in style! to have the body which robes the soul itself enrobed in the most delicate fabrics of the most immediate caprice! to give the body a new language, a second vocabulary and a music outside its own, and to change the phrasing as often and as much as can be. If the prayer is not granted they are sometimes plucky and sometimes philosophic, but they are never content.

For the savage a fresh sea-shell or a bright leaf, blue paint, a necklace of the teeth of dead foreigners, the fur of a saber-toothed tiger—these made a new Easter. For the civilized woman a necklace composed of the incysted worms of a bed of oysters, a gown of numberless silkworm cocoons unraveled and spun together again, a hat stuck full of the feathers of a shot bird, in winter a robe made of the quilted fleece of a flock of unborn lambs trimmed with the patched fells of a dozen better unborn skunks—those constitute a satisfactory adornment.

When women decided that the highest art is the concealment of nature it was as long a step from animaldom as when men learned to make weapons. It meant that the human hide should no longer be a pelt, that it should not be blistered by the sun, scratched by briers, calloused and warted from cave floors. It should become itself

the finest fabric of all the looms. It should be revealed only in spots and glimpses. Gradually costume, which began as an advertisement of sex, developed like poster art to such a point that it concealed what it was supposed to recommend. Gradually costume ceased to be a device to attract the men's eyes away from other women, and grew to be a campaign to attract the eyes of other women away from other women, and to poison them with envy, though it bankrupted the men. The enormity of this traffic brought such men as Dutilh into big commercial importance, and brought such girls as Maryla opportunities to act as living show-counters.

Maryla Sokalska had spent her life in such drudgery, in such squalor, at such close quarters with starvation, that she had been hardly more than a sleek and dim-eyed mole burrowing in the ground incessantly for food enough to go on burrowing. Then she was haled up into the full noon sun and given eyes and understanding.

And now she must scutter back to the old mole-hole and tell the blind ones what the rainbow is like. The worst of it was that the Sokalskis were not even good moles.

Her people were not born sempsters. The grandfather was short-sighted and asthmatic, and his sewing accomplished little more than to keep him out of an old man's mischief.

Adam, the father, was tireless, or, rather, he was always tired, yet unresting. He had meant to be a rabbi, but a pogrom drove him in poverty to America and he had never got back to his books. He was born to be a scholar and he read nothing but seams.

Rosa, the mother, was all thumbs, and for ever undoing what she had done, for ever breaking needles.

Dosia, the big little fat sister, was lazy and incompetent; she had two passions, food and play, and she got little of either.

Maryla would have been skilful enough as a lacemaker or broiderer, but she abominated the manufacture of

overalls for workmen. Pasinsky, the boarder, was a dreamer, and so deeply in love with Maryla that his eyes were usually on her instead of the seams, and his feet paused on the treadle for long periods of reverie.

That was why the Sokalskis were poor; they were doing cheap work without affection for it, and the world has never paid well for that—and never will.

To Maryla the whole adventure would have been a mere fantastic dream if it were not for the reality of the taxicab carrying her home. The jolts and jounces of that magic carpet would have knocked any dreamer out of bed.

As Maryla returned, sliding backward from paradise, after a peek in at the doors, she hated her old environment the more furiously the nearer she approached it.

She was coming back with something of the mood of a traveler who has heard contemptuous references to foreign lands and has skimmed through them, finding them so beautiful, generous, and lovable as to make contempt contemptible.

The taxicab passed windows where second-hand ball-gowns were displayed. Maryla had once longed for those blatancies. Now she saw that they were crude parodies of styles long out of style. When the cab moved slowly and with incessant squawking through Houston Street she began to recognize friends of hers whom yesterday she had accounted well-dressed; now they seemed to be beggars.

Her debarkation from the taxicab was almost more of a sensation than the departure in it. Those who had believed then that she had been carried away by white-slavers now assumed that she had fought her way free and brought off the taxicab.

Maryla had little to say to the queries. She hurried up the steps of her own tenement so fast that when she threw open the door she had to fall back against it, panting and holding her heart in her left hand.

The vision of her caused dismay among the sewing-machinists. They checked their treadles and stared over their shoulders like a platoon of bicyclists.

Pasinsky rose with such alarm that he knocked over his chair.

"Maryla, what you got now?" he cried. "A heart-disease? Yes?"

"A job!" she panted. "I got a grand job by rich dressmakers. I am a model."

There was a beatitude upon her face that illumined all the others by reflection. Her father smiled to see her smile; then he asked, cautiously:

"Mottels? Vat for a bitsness it is, dose mottels?"

Maryla explained the magic profession:

"Miss Schuyler takes me by Mr. Dutilh. He woiks by dresses and hets. She says, 'Give my friend a job sewing.' He says, 'You are too pretty, my dear, to make dresses. You should wear them.' Yes, he said that. So I'm goin' to put on dresses and show them off to fi-ine ladies, and if they like, they buy them off me; if they don't like, I take off and put on another dress yet. All day I am putting on and taking off fine garments."

Adam scented danger in the enterprise. His daughter was to be hired for her beauty, not for her craft or industry. It looked perilous. He said:

"How *viel Geld* you get by soch a fectory?"

"Twelve dollars a week, papa!"

"Zwölf dollars in one veek!" gasped Adam. She nodded her head vigorously, and he protested: "Dot is not a bitsness; it is a schwindlie. All of us here dun't got zwölf dollars a veek. How should you got it?"

Then he eyed her with sudden suspicion; a crafty look went slowly across his face; his lips parted, baring a big rectangular smile and he reached out to tweak her cheek.

"*Ach, du Kleine!* She's choking!"

But finally she convinced him that manna and quails still fell from heaven, even through ceilings. With some

misgivings he consented that she should be permitted to take the position, provided she came straight home evenings and brought home all of her money. To this she answered:

"Of course. What you think I am?"

She was so happy that she kissed her father and resumed her work at the sewing-machine.

Her feet plied the treadles with enthusiasm. She was like a young girl that runs across a meadow whispering a song into the breeze. Pasinsky, watching her, shook his head. She was running away too fleetly for his pursuit.

By and by Dosia murmured, "Say, Maryla."

"Yes."

"What's a swell house like? What's Miss Schuyler's house like?"

"Like the new school-house, only with foiniture and silk rugs. And an elevator it's got."

"Elevators is a factory," sniffed Dosia, who was far too wise to be duped.

Maryla insisted: "They have a elevator in their house, and stairs, too—marble—really marble. And tea I had, too."

"Humph! We have tea here!"

"Not such a tea like this Miss Schuyler has."

"Did the lady cook it herself and is the stove all over with solid gold?"

"No! She cooks nothing. Ladies don't cook. She has two gentlemen that make the tea and bring it in—two big fallers like policemen, only one is in a full-dress suit. And everything is silver but only the cups. My cup was like silk, like silk with starch into it. I could see my fingers through it."

"Sillik and silliver!" sighed Pasinsky, studying the enraptured reverie of Maryla. "You got more better right as those Schuyler girl to have sillik and silliver."

Maryla rewarded him with a smile of gratitude for

his discernment. But Adam glared at him and motioned him to keep silence. He did not want such ideas put into Maryla's head. As if they were not already there!

The next morning there was nearly as much flutter about getting the daughter of the house ready for the new job as if she were a regiment marching off to war. When the mobilizing of Maryla was accomplished they all wept over her, her father most bitterly.

She was so beautiful to him that he was afraid of her beauty and for it. He held her in his arms and kissed her forehead. His beard was bedabbled with his tears. Maryla found it thrilling to make her father cry. Pasinsky's tears did not get beyond his eyelashes. He wanted her and could not buy her, and now she was to be put in the show-window. Dosia and her mother wept with pride. Maryla kissed them all good-by except Pasinsky, who would have relished it most of all.

It was lonely at home that day. All the eyes had a way of reverting to the sewing-machine. It looked forlorn without Maryla there in the attitude that was almost as permanent as the outline of the window or the fire-escape. Several times she was spoken to and it seemed strange that she did not answer. It was almost easier to believe that she was merely invisible than that she was actually absent.

Now the simmering quartette of machines was only a trio, and made a diminished music. The canary-bird chirped repeatedly and cocked his head, waiting for Maryla to chirp back at him. Dosia tried to take her place, but the imitation did not satisfy that exacting little yellow critic. The very geranium regretted Maryla. Dosia forgot to water it, and it drooped with the rest of the family.

At half past six Maryla came home, and was greeted like an arctic explorer escaped after a year in the ice-floes.

First she must lift her hat and show off her hair. It had been elaborately coiffed. Rosa and Dosia shrieked with admiration. Pasinsky felt but did not say that it had brought out an unsuspected sensuousness in all her mien. Adam was disgusted and frightened. It was not respectable. He turned his eyes away.

Strange! that the arrangement this way or that of the excrescent skeins on the head could assume such spiritual importance that one's judgment of another's soul should be influenced by the point at which he draws the comb to part his hair, or the spots at which she places her hair-pins and establishes loops.

Maryla saw her father averting his gaze as from her shame. She blushed and explained:

"Mr. Dutilh made me have it so. It makes the dresses look better."

But Adam groaned, "It iss not decent!"

Rosa tried to suppress him, but he had resumed his work again, hopelessly. Relieved of his woeful eyes, Maryla brightened again and lifted her skirts to show that her stockings were of silk. She revealed to the women that she had linen wear of extraordinary aristocracy, and she made them feel along her sleek sides where the new corset, the astonishing envelope the women wrapped themselves in in the fall of 1913, did its best to conform her anatomy to the shape of a cigar—bust, waist, hips all merged as far as possible in one smooth cylinder.

"Shoes, too, I got, with heels—so high! I leave those by Meesteh Dutilh's."

The appalling cost of all these things implied a mortgage on her earnings for life, but she explained that Mr. Dutilh had furnished them as part of her equipment, for the sake of Miss Schuyler.

She described the gowns she had worn during the day, in details that were gibberish to the men, but set the women squealing with vivid envy. Adam had turned

to listen. He was interested in the fabulous prices till she told him that she had worn and had seen sold one gown that brought seven hundred and fifty dollars and consisted of next to nothing.

Adam was aghast at the price; it was more than he earned in a year with his family's help. He was worse shocked at the paucity of fabric. He hated to think of Maryla in it—or out of it. She laughed at him and told him that one of the city's noblest ladies had bought it to wear at the opera. The old man blushed deep into his beard, and mumbled:

"I dun't like you should be in soch a place. I am gled you come home eveninks by your femily."

"That's one trouble, papa. I can't live at home."

He looked as if he could not have heard her aright.

She explained: "This morning Mr. Dutilh talks to me and he says, 'I should have your name and address, my dear'—he calls everybody 'my dear.' And I says, 'Orchard Street,' and he says, 'Where is that at? Brooklyn?' And I tell him where it is and he says, 'My God!' —always he says that—'You live down there in those sloms?' he says. 'If my customers know you live there and wear their clothes they never buy anything off me. They come never near again,' and he says, 'It's too bad!' So I says, 'All right, I go. I'm sorry. What should I tell Miss Schuyler?' Then he jumps and says, 'My God! I can't throw you out like that. All you got to do is to move up-town once. You get a room up here, my dear.' So that's what I got to do. I will come home Sundays—and often evenings."

There it was! There was the bombshell that wrecks the home. The daughter was already lured from the shelter; she would fare the crowded ways alone. She would become like these modernized unbelieving Jewesses, the *taytschke*, who eat anything, whether it is kosher or not, who do not observe the rites, believe the belief, or follow the path of esteem.

With graver majesty than one would have expected and with deep conviction of duty, Adam made the decision; renounced that wealth of twelve dollars a week and commanded Maryla to give up the Dutilh post and stay home at her own machine. She stared at him in alarm: "Papa, you don't mean it."

"I mean it!" he said; "I have decidet."

Obediently Maryla dropped to her place. Her feet like hack-horses under the lash began to climb the same old hill. She sewed, but now with a smoldering sullenness that showed itself in her anger at the needle and her brutality toward the helpless cloth.

The morning was heartbreaking to Maryla. She fell out of a paradise of dreams upon the rough granite of reality. In her dreams she had been promenading with satin and ermine and silver brocade about her. But the dream was done. A girl had to obey her father.

Suddenly she remembered Muriel. Miss Schuyler had treated her great wealthy well-dressed father like a querulous child. Maryla could not laugh at her solemn father, but perhaps she could defy him. There was still time to reach Dutilh's for the day. She made up her mind. She stopped the machine, snapped the thread, folded the completed trousers leg, carried it to the stack—then confronted her father:

"Papa, I'm goin' woik by Meesteh Dutilh's. I'm not goin' woik here any more. I come see you, but never will I sew any more pents all the time."

Adam was thunderstruck. This was mutiny. This was America. This was Yankee corruption invading his patriarchate. This was worth stopping the machine for.

Adam rose from his place. He did not rise very high. He was short, and his knees were bent from his everlasting crouch; but he seemed as tall as Joshua bidding the sun stand still upon Gibeon. All the majesty he had was his authority and the ancient tradition back of it.

"Maryla!" he thundered, raising his awful forefinger, "you dun't leave dis ho'se! You hear? You dun't go!"

But Maryla was born in a country where the sun does not stand still, where the tradition is that tradition shall not rule.

She answered in a mild, meek, frightened tone; but her heart was adamant. "Yes, papa, I do go; and I ask you, please, don't make an excitement."

"An excitement, she says!" he roared. "She says, 'Dun't make an excitement!' And she spits in my beard; she goes to voik by dose *Goyim!* I am no more her fadder. My home iss not goot *genug* for such a fine lady like her!"

From the next room the sick and wounded Balinsky called aloud in fright: "*Was ist's—was ist's? Bitte!*"

For his sake they lowered their voices. Americanism was infecting Adam, too. He was defied and he could not strike. He hated his weakness, but he could only make idle threats in whispers:

"Maryla, if you go, you never come beck!"

"All right, papa. Just as you say. But I got to go. I got to get some life. I got to see something besides this sewing-machine. And you got a right to help me, you have."

"I got a right to keep you a goot gerl, dat is all."

"I can be good there. I will be good."

"You begin to be goot by to mock your fadder! You are bat already. For pretty dresses and sillik stockinks gerls like you are go on de street yet."

"Papa!" Rosa protested, frantic at seeing her husband at war with their child, "You should not make such a woids. Dosia is here."

But Adam was sustained by a sense of duty to his family and his creed.

Maryla dreaded only to be late to Dutilh's. She opened the door and, with a fluent sinuousness, moved round it and was gone.

Adam dropped to his sewing-machine, and motioned the others to theirs. He seemed, to himself at least, to be sewing his own grave-clothes, his *tachrichim;* and they were stained with the sin of the child intrusted to him, for the sins of the children are visited also on the parents.

CHAPTER XXI

YOUNG runaways do not suffer like old left-at-homes. Maryla's gloom rose from her in a black fog as she hurried down the steps. The noisy, smelly street made a racket that was pleasant as a thing to escape. The street-car on the Bowery came up like a chariot. She was smiling with such anticipation that the conductor grinned and called her "kiddo." She administered a stinging rebuke, "Don't you get so fresh!"

Northward the car groaned, swerved into Fourth Avenue, and emerged from the tunnel at the door-step of the great Grand Central Station, that doorway to unimaginable Ispahans and Thules. Then the car wore round into Madison Avenue, a cañon of marvelous hotels and shops.

Maryla took on dignity and aristocracy with distance. She pressed the button to stop the car as if she were summoning a butler. She brushed the conductor with a glance like the flick of a contemptuous fan, and he said, respectfully:

"Mind the step, lady."

She marched across to Fifth Avenue and into Dutilh's as if she were going there to buy instead of to sell. But once within, her soul plummeted to the depths of meekness.

She was afraid of her ignorances, so many ignorances of so many things. She was afraid even to talk. Yesterday she had overheard one of the models mimicking her speech. It is a strange experience to see oneself imitated, and Maryla did not relish it.

She determined to reform her dialect at once. Her quick ear told her that she had been putting the *umlaut* over the English "a" and changing it to a short "e," as in "understend." She could not change the habit of years at once, and she blushed at her relapses with the shame of a cockney hearing another "h" let slip.

She tried to solve the unfathomed mystery of distinction between ladies and gentlemen and those who are not. She thought she had it once, when she said to herself that it was the difference between those who were haughty because they came to buy and those who were humble because they were there to sell. But other customers came in who were not ladies, for all their wealth and insolence. And Dutilh was not humble, though he tried to sell, and he was not insolent, for all his impudence. She decided that he was a gentleman—or a quaint mixture of gentleman and lady.

The study of morals engaged her next. Why did she instantly resolve that certain of the girls and certain of the customers were bad women? It was not a matter of beauty or language. One or two were brazen and smoked Dutilh's cigarettes and swore and wanted the lowest cut in gowns; yet she felt them to be reliable and staunch in honor. Others were shy and sweet and prudish, yet Maryla felt that they were as sly as shy; treacherous, lovers of the dark. And some were brazen and seemed vicious, and some were shy and seemed virtuous. She could make no rules. This up-town world was frightfully complicated.

She had a more immediate problem. Where was she to live? She consulted the other models. She was a foreigner among them. They were as various as womankind and she was afraid of them all. She picked out the most innocent and unassuming of them, a girl called Fay Quincy.

Fay's innocence departed when she spoke. Her mouth was cruel and cunning. She sneered at cheap boarding-houses, and that afternoon when the shop

closed Maryla saw her step into an automobile. She thought she saw a man in it.

The only girl Maryla dared not ask was a great animal of slithy attitudes and gaudy lips. Her name was Elise Addison. Elise volunteered her own address.

Maryla accepted her advice with trepidation, wondering what she should find. She found a poor old landlady with a fanatic kindliness, who gave her boarders more than she could afford and was sustained in her poverty by an illusion that she had once known luxury. Also, Elise had a sick mother who kept her straight by the despotism of the feeble.

Maryla's room was only three flights up. It was what is known as a hall bedroom—the end of a narrow hall cut off by a door. The bed, the bureau, a chair, and a wardrobe left little room for Maryla. But it was all hers! There were no eyes to dodge, no casual glances to fear. She did not have to undress as she did at home, using part of her costume as a screen while she removed another part; slipping her nightgown over her head to hide the departure of her skirts.

Mr. Pasinsky had been considerateness itself, but his very back had seemed to be armed with eyes, and there had been immodesty in the dread that he might look round, although he never did.

Now Maryla had a cell of her own, a door with a lock on it, and the key for herself. She had acquired solitude. That is an epoch-making achievement in any life.

More marvelous still, there was a bath-room next to Maryla's room. It was not necessary to send the men out to the street when she wanted to climb into the wash-tub and launder herself. There was a special tub devoted exclusively to bathing! It was so long that one could actually extend oneself in the water! And the water was lavishly copious and thrillingly hot, unless some of the other boarders beat Maryla to the tub.

Once she was there and locked in, she was safer than

Susanna, and she could lie at length in a circumambience of water like a sultana in a marble pool. She could bathe her very soul in Narcissal luxury. She was proud to be alive now. It was glorious to be rich, to work no more than ten hours a day, to live in a magnificent up-town boarding-house's hall bedroom.

And yet even here discontent could thrive. Alas for human insatiability! This lotos-eater's existence did not bring a permanent satisfaction. It was rapturous to spend one's days in putting on the finest costumes of the supreme fashion-contrivers. But she could not wear them home. She had to see them sold to other women or put away for to-morrow's sale.

And loneliness took an increasing share in her discontent. Everybody else seemed to have some place to go, somebody to call on, or somebody coming to call. Maryla was either afraid or disdainful of the boarding-house inhabitants. She had no money to spend. She grew fearfully homesick, but she could not go home. She had nothing to do but wait till to-morrow brought its own discontents.

She hastened through all the strata of a girl's transformation into womanhood in a few days. In a few hours she had leaped to the consciousness of beauty and of her own equipment. She realized the importance of having a self and of exploiting it with skill and poise.

Her beauty was of the tropic sort, fierce but sad, like the luscious melancholy of a summer afternoon. There was an almost morose rebellion about it. She had the making of one who would never know contentment for more than a little while. She was doomed to passionate longings, frenzies of joy in possession, then speedy weariness, and a sudden infatuation for something else—for something that seemed better because it was beyond.

She had been enraptured at the thought of rest and solitude of evenings. Already she was tired of her solitude, weary of her boarding-house.

The trade of changing her clothes still held her; it had grown, indeed, upon her. But now her grief was that she could not keep one of the endless series for herself.

Dutilh would lay over her arm a gown that she would have sold her soul for if she could have found a soul-buyer. She would step into it, or lower it over her head, and walk out into the showroom, taking aristocracy from the gown. Shortly afterward she must retreat to the dressing-room and take off the splendor, and stand in her shift till another tissue was brought or until she was ordered to get back into her own shoddy togs.

Eve had exhausted Eden, all except the forbidden tree. And then Perry Merithew drifted into Dutilh's shop.

CHAPTER XXII

UNDER the spell of the remembered dance with Muriel, and the fantastic emotions of decency she had inspired him with, Perry had neglected his expensive playmate, Aphra Shaler. He had neglected her shamefully, she said.

Finally she had summoned him and wept before him till he was convinced that he was a heartless monster. To atone for his neglect he invited her to visit Atlantic City. She wailed that she had nothing to wear.

He invited her to come with him to Dutilh's and see if they could find anything fit for her loveliness. Aphra's tears dried with almost audible immediateness.

Dutilh greeted her with the homage due her genius for extracting whole trousseaux from foolish men's pocketbooks. Perry had planned to buy her one gown and let Dutilh wait for his money.

Aphra reveled in the new styles as if they were made of catnip. Her hair was at that time in its auburn phase, and while Aphra was in a dressing-room trying on a Cubist insanity from Paris, Dutilh picked out another for her inspection. He selected Maryla to march forward in it, since she was nearer the general hue of Aphra than any of his other walking-ladies.

And so Maryla arrived within the ken of Perry Merithew.

With her arms extended and her fingers posed according

to the formula, the tip of the thumb touching the tip of the second finger affectedly, she went undulantly up and down.

Perry had begun to realize that he was being taken in. He had volunteered Aphra one new gown as a peace-offering. He had already been "run up the pole" for three; Aphra was putting on another, and here was still one more walking past him. Aphra seemed to change her personality with each change of gown, but Perry was intolerant of all the Aphras.

His enthusiasm suffered an abrupt chill. He looked upon Maryla with resentful eyes that suddenly wakened to her dreamy beauty. She and her gown seemed to have been created together. To his spoiled soul there was something quaint and foreign, something poignantly beautiful about her.

Seeing that Dutilh was at a distance hunting for further wares to tempt Aphra, he beckoned Maryla closer, and murmured in his most amiable tone:

"Do you know, my dear young lady, that you are as pretty as can be? Yes, sir, you're the prettiest thing I've seen in ages."

"Why, thenk you!" said Maryla with the deference proper to an important customer and with a ferocious heart-fluttering on her own account.

"What do you think of that gown you have on?"

"I love it," said Maryla, as a loyal saleswoman must, and with a deep personal conviction.

"I'll buy it for you, if you'll wear it."

"I—I don't understend," Maryla whispered, feeling swoony.

"I'll explain myself later," he said.

Neither of them had noticed that Aphra had emerged from concealment, blatant in a new evening gown which Dutilh was pinning up here and letting down there.

"How do you like this, dearie?" Aphra had said. She

said it twice before either Perry or Maryla realized that she had spoken.

If Aphra had been less excited over her own beauty she might have noted the confusion she caused and observed the birth of rivalry.

Maryla was dazed, but not too dazed to realize that a pleasant conspiracy was afoot and that Aphra was not "in on it."

She had no idea of Perry Merithew's previous existence. If she had ever heard his name, it had made no impression on her. She did not know it now. Maryla knew only that Perry Merithew was attractive to see and that he offered her the way to own a handsome gown. Those were enough to earn him her courtesy. And a kind of pleading command in his voice and smile was enough to earn him her obedience.

What she may have thought of Aphra is uncertain. When Aphra, after trying in vain to wheedle any more costumes out of Perry, retired to take off the latest dress she had tried on, Perry beckoned Maryla near again.

The other models were making parades before their customers. They were not aware of Merry Perry's surreptitious dealings. In an undertone he said:

"What time do you finish here, my dear?"

"At five o'clock, sir," Maryla answered, wonderingly.

"At five o'clock, eh? Well, look here, my pretty child, at five o'clock I'll be at the corner above in my automobile; it's a limousine—of a hunter-green color; you can't miss it. I'll wait for you. When you come along, you just step in and we'll have a little spin and a little talk. What do you say? Will you?"

"Yes, sir," said Maryla.

CHAPTER XXIII

MARYLA told none of the other models what had happened. She went to the dressing-room and took off the beautiful gown. She caressed it and brooded over it. It was to be hers! She, too, was to possess festival attire!

What did it matter how much it cost? She had the price to pay! Those women out there should not be the only ones to wear such things. She should not slink on for ever shabbily through the world. A man's business is to get money; a woman's business is to get finery. She was no longer to be a bankrupt. Success was hers.

She had endured such torment as the bank-teller endures who juggles wealth in bundles and cannot pay his rent. Now she would embezzle. All the fierce, defiant arguments and philosophies that sustain the thief and the outlaw surged up in her soul.

She had a vague notion of the price she would be expected to pay. But that neither alarmed her nor charmed her; it remained vague in the back room of her brain. The thing that fired her soul was the fact that luxury had come within her reach at last; adventure and romance were established in her history.

There were several hours to be passed over before she was free. She dressed and posted up and down in other clothes for other customers, but with less humility than before; for now she too had a Dutilh gown of the latest model. She had also a cavalier.

When closing-time came she was ready to go while

Elise was still crouched over her street shoes with a button-hook.

"Ain't you waitin' for me, Mareel?" said Elise.

"Not to-night. I gotta—got to—to do some shop'n'—shopping. G'by."

She hurried out, followed by eyes. She walked to the corner. She was not sure just what a limousine was, but she saw a very large shiny taxicab at the curb, and it was dark green. Her heart shot into a gallop. She walked by and could not look in. A voice came from the depths:

"Oh, there you are, my child."

A hand opened the door, but no foot appeared. She turned like a puppet and saw Merithew beckoning her. He did not get out, but she was not used enough to chivalry to notice the difference. She got in. The car rolled away without command, in Arabian obedience.

So this was a limousine! And now, at last, she was in one. It was twice as nice as the car that Fay Quincy got into of evenings.

A few days ago she would have thought that a limousine was either a kind of fruit or a new cut of dress. Now she knew. Limousines, it seems, are hall rooms on wheels, only they are all over with upholstery, and they have bouquets of flowers in vases hung on the walls.

Perry looked at Maryla in a way that put all flattery and hospitality into a glance like a hand-clasp. And he said, brilliantly, "Well, my dear, you kept your promise, didn't you?"

Her reply was equally brilliant: "Yes sir."

He took the flowers from the vase. Their stems were wrapped in tin-foil, and a pin was stuck on them.

"May I ask you to accept these?" he said. She seized them avidly. Her joy was her thanks. He watched her pinning them over her heart. At length he said, "Would it be asking too much if I asked your name?"

"Maryla," she said.

She was going to tell her other name, but suddenly she realized that this might not enhance her in his eyes.

"Maryla what?" he said.

"Just only Maryla," she said.

"Aren't we cautious!" he laughed. "What are we—Russian?"

"American—by Polish."

"Oh," said Perry. Polish was picturesque. "Do you know my name?" he said.

"No, sir."

"I am Mr. Brown. Mr. Just Only Brown."

"Thank you, Meesteh Brown," she said, delighted by the irresistible compliment of quotation.

Perry tried desperately to find something more to say, and accomplished only, "Been a model long?"

Maryla checked this truth also on the lintel of her lips. She remembered that Dutilh had almost discharged her because she came from where she came from. If she confessed to being a débutante in the model class, she would have to explain how Miss Schuyler had found her in those slums.

She answered his "How long?" with a careless, "Oh, quite some time."

This satisfied him, and she did not mention Muriel's name. Nor did he. He never dreamed that Muriel had brought Maryla into his sphere of influence, nor did Maryla dream that Muriel knew him.

The car slid along the Avenue as if it were a royal sleigh. When they turned into Central Park Maryla found it beautiful beyond remembrance. She saw it with different eyes.

When she saw it first with Muriel she had been unable to recover from her first view of Fifth Avenue's one long shop-window. Now she was used to the window. She had been one of its displays.

Now she was with a gentleman. The sunset senti-

mentalism was upon her. She was in a mood for trees and their foliage, for the graceful attitudes of roadways, the bliss of twilit air.

Her heart gave back an æolian music to the breath of the world. She quivered now with the satisfaction of fine cushions, of glossy enamel, the pulse of the car's speed, the pride of outrunning another car. There was a rapture in the mere swerve around another motor or a corner; an ecstasy in a sudden arrest to avoid a collision or a murder.

It was miraculous to be seated with this fine gentleman in this little magic room that ran about among trees and lakes and a series of paradises. There were so many rich people in the world, too; such countless motors of all shapes and sizes. But none so fine as hers. Along the sky-line of the reservoir men and women rode by in jiggly silhouette; it was funny to see the daylight between the saddles and the riders.

Maryla exclaimed: "Look at those ladies riding those horses! They got no skoits on over their pents! And the policeman on horseback looking right at them! And not arresting them. Isn't it awful!"

Perry, who did not approve of riding-breeches, agreed that it was. There were carriages, too, some of them very stately; the varnished horses seemed insufferably conceited. On the high front seat of one victoria sat two lords in uniform, and back of them sat two old ladies.

"Are those ladies the wives of those gentlemen?" said Maryla.

"Not officially," said Perry.

He was fascinated by her ceaseless raptures over this tiresome old park drive that he had taken incessantly since he had first taken it in his mother's lap. He was refreshed by Maryla's fresh vision of ancient things.

She was like a child born full-grown. She was not afraid to like what she saw, nor to say so. She was not afraid to be grateful.

Aphra Shaler and Pet Bettany and most of the women he knew seemed to feel that if they expressed too much satisfaction with his gifts he would think he had done enough.

He resolved to take Maryla to many parks. After Central Park they soared up to Morningside Park, and through a dozen others.

And so they reached the destination he had planned, with Maryla in a state of complete enchantment. They had traversed miles on miles of winding roads and avenues strung with parks like blocks of malachite. Maryla could not believe that all the world held so much grace and splendor. Perry had not complicated the hypnotism with any attempt at flirtation or courtship. He had studied her, and encouraged her delight. He neither corrected her mistakes nor patronized her.

She felt amazingly at ease with him, old friends in an hour. At length when a swerve of the car flung her against him she ceased to edge away; and when he took her hand and held it, it never occurred to her that she should resist or resent.

They passed many inns of more or less attractive demeanor. If Aphra had been with him she would have selected the Abbey or Claremont, alleging the view as her excuse and rather considering the price.

Perry was afraid of Maryla's table technic. He had no scruples against being seen in evil company; but he had a horror of gauchery. He had feared that if he took her to a restaurant of degree she might make some slip that would amuse a waiter.

He had thought it all out. He had provided the properties for his little drama. He knew his New York well enough to know of a secluded spot where there was an abundance of scenery and a paucity of observation.

His chauffeur stopped, according to earlier instructions, outside Fort Washington Park, the dilapidated, neglected

spot where in the early days of the Revolution Lords Howe, Cornwallis, and Percy, and Knuyphausen's conscript Hessians had stormed Fort Washington and captured Magaw and two thousand patriots while George Washington, on the Palisades across the river, watched the slaughter of his men and wept.

Perry Merithew knew little of Washington, and Maryla knew less, and there was no reminder of a battle-field in the woods. Groden, the chauffeur, took from the trunk-rack of the car a large hamper and carried it down the path and into the park.

It was a shabby park, discouraged with dust and begrimed with smoke from the occasional trains that shoot unseen through a narrow gorge. But to Maryla it was wonderland. To Perry it was seclusion.

Companies of towering whitewood-trees stood slenderly about. Paths wound through the ragged, unkempt grasses, littered in spots with old orange-peels and paper bags, the disjected relics of former picnics. Rocks sprawled among the weeds. Across the gorge were other trees. Through foliage frames were vignettes of the mighty river and the solemn cliffside opposite.

Perry asked Maryla to choose her own table, and she ran from nook to nook like a child let out of school. At last she chose a little plateau in the lee of a slanting boulder, and there the impatient Groden set down his hamper.

There were flowers—a few—very proper ones that kept early hours. They were already closing for the night.

Maryla ran about picking them, bending like a flower stem in the wind and laughing in little fluty tones that amused the drowsy birds gathering in the hope of crumbs and singing for their supper.

"How many, many flowers there are!" Maryla said. "Millions there are. And me so proud of my one little geranium. It's a pity these should be wasted. They

should grow in town. What country is this we are in now?"

"This is New York City still," said Perry, indulgently.

"Always New York!" she gasped. "What a wonderful city. And it has birds in it! I have a bird at home. Listen to those little fellers!" She looked up into the branches. "Hallo! hallo! little feller! go on, sing some more yet. See the fat one! He's goin' to bust if he don't watch out, from singing so hard. My poor little bird is into a cage. When I go home I'll let him free. There they go. Good-by, little birds! Good luck! good luck!

"What river is that? The Hudson? Oh, such a big river! Pasinsky says it goes to the sea. Did you ever see the sea?"

Perry modestly admitted this distinction. She shook her head in awe of him.

"I didn't know the world was such a beautiful city. It must have been some place like this where Moses was when Yahveh lifted him up to a high place. I tell you a person had ought to be terrible good in as beautiful a world, don't you think?"

Merithew parried this unexpected and unwelcome conclusion with one from his own creed. "A person had ought to be happy in such a beautiful world."

"But they couldn't be happy if they didn't be good, could they?"

"Well, I've never been good, but I've usually been happy."

"Oh, you! You are the best man that ever was. So kind to me. I can't understend—understand it."

"That's selfishness; it makes me happy to be with you."

"Does it!—truly?"

Perry could have said more, but Groden was everywhere; and Groden's look was annoying. He had taken from the hamper a linen cloth and spread it on the grass, and set out plates and dishes and silver. There were split chickens and salad and sweets, hot coffee in a vacuum

container and cold water in another, and two little bottles with gilded necks in a small bucket of ice.

Maryla loved nature, but art was nature plus humanity, and she was recalled from the landscape by the wizardry of that basketed feast. Groden moved about in ironic silence. There was no noise except the pleasant clink of plates and silver.

When he had set the board, Merithew told him to take the car to the Abbey and get his own dinner; then to come back and wait outside the park.

Groden vanished in the wilderness and seemed to take a load off Merithew's mind. Perry regained youth from Maryla's youthfulness and motioned her to a place, then dropped to the ground, Turk fashion, at her side.

He tossed her a napkin, whose sheerness gave her a thrill of delight. She tucked it under her chin, and when he offered her a plate of roasted chicken she took a drumstick in her fingers and made ready to gnaw.

Then to her horror she saw that Perry had not tucked his napkin under his chin, but had set it on his knee. As secretly as she could she drew hers from her throat and folded it back and put it on her lap.

He parted his chicken with a knife and fork and she corrected her own attack to conform. She began to crisscross-cut her lettuce with her knife and fork till she saw that he dispensed with the knife. Then she tried to mimic him, but the lettuce was elusive and she had to hunt it all across her plate and over the edge and back again.

The sky grew darker and warmer in color. The west was leagues of roses.

Perry twisted the wire from one of the little bottles and unscrewed the cork. An eager froth came cluttering forth into the glass he held. He passed it to Maryla, and filled himself a glass, raised it, and said:

"Here's to your big eyes, Miss Just Only Maryla."

"Oh, thank you," she giggled.

"But you're not drinking."

She put the glass to her lips and started back before the tiny bombardment.

"What is it?" she said.

"Champagne."

"I don't think I'd better take any tshempen. Papa might not like it."

"Papa isn't here. This is my party."

"Thenk you, but better I didn't."

"To please me."

"Well, to please you." She closed her eyes and braved a sip, only to recoil from the brim with a grimace. "Ugh! it tastes like a paper of needles."

"It improves with acquaintance. Try again."

"Yes, sir—if you say so. You should tell me when to stop." She took another sip. Already it was better, and a look of regret came into his eyes.

"Shall I take more?" she asked, expecting assent.

"No," he said, and took the glass from her and poured it on the ground. He was amazed at himself and said, "I'll empty mine—here." He quaffed it off.

They talked as they scoured their plates in extravagant felicity.

When they had made a great feast of the slender fare she folded up the things and packed them in the hamper. He smoked and watched her and found her singularly graceful, singularly interesting.

Through the final crimson a sailboat almost becalmed was drifting like a huge white moth at rest under closed wings.

"Look!" Maryla whispered. "See the ship!"

"It's a sloop," said Perry. "It's about the build of mine."

"You have a whole ship of your own?" she marveled. "Are you a steamboat captain?"

He shook his head, and then she asked:

"Where do you work?"

He laughed. "I don't."

She could not seem to understand this.

He explained: "I just have my boat to loaf round in. Would you like to go sailing in it some day?"

"Oh, I'd love it—some Sunday when I'm not working."

"What if you didn't work any more?"

"I've got to."

"Not if you—not if you— I don't want you to work any more, Maryla. I need you myself."

She wrinkled her brows and smiled in a look of quaint perplexity:

"I don't understand."

"Maryla, I want you to—to live with me."

She had thought that nothing could be more wonderful than the wonders she had seen this day. But she had grown so used to miracles that it seemed quite credible that a great man like him should stoop to conquer her and make her his bride.

"You mean you—you mean we should get married?" she whispered in wide-eyed rapture.

"Naturally," he answered, baffled a little by the deifying look she fastened on him. In later days his conscience sought refuge in that word "naturally" as a kind of ghastly pun.

Maryla dallied with the splendor of his proffer.

"But for why—for why should you like me when so many fi-ine ladies are in the world?"

"Because I—I'm simply crazy about you, child. You fascinate me. You make the world all new and young again. I never met anybody like you. You don't know anything, do you? But you're—you're different. I—I'm crazy about you, that's all. I'm just crazy about you."

Maryla shuddered into his arm with a laughing ecstasy:

"And me—I am crezzy about you."

By now the moon was pouring from the east her silver into the red west. The two lights filled everything with a kind of witchery of altruism, a melting tender-hearted-

ness, an aversion from harsh words, protests, denials. It was the hour of rose and azure when the people draw close together against the night, when the eyes are blindfolded by the universal dusk and hands grope out in loneliness and voices sink to whispers. The breeze itself was a whisper and it had an irresistible persuasiveness.

Merithew found Maryla's hands. They were cold. She shivered a little, and when he drew her closer she did not oppose him. When he whispered, "Kiss me, Maryla," though she whimpered, "Oh no, no, please!" she did not fight away from him. He kissed her cold cheek and it seemed to grow suddenly warm beneath his lips.

He murmured, "I love you." He had said the word so often, so recklessly, that he knew all the uses of it. But it was almost new to her, entirely new from such a wooer as this. She believed him.

When he whispered, "Love me, Maryla," she loved him. When he demanded, "Kiss me, Maryla," she took pride in her meekness, and obeyed him.

The sky belonged to the moon; the world was the moon's world. Between the pleached boughs of the lofty tulip-trees the moon was like a distant lamp behind a lattice. There was no hint of humankind about except on the distant river, where a few boats moved dreamily, their lights pouring rubies and emeralds into the river with Cleopatran wantonness.

By and by a long excursion-boat steamed north like a dragon in gleaming scales. People were dancing on the deck and the music came across the water as with dew upon it. But at the head of the boat was a big search-light that swept the hills and clouds and all the scene for the amusement or instruction of the passengers.

The inconceivable swiftness and scope of its revelation terrified Maryla, who had never heard of it. To her it was like a dark lantern carried by a giant watchman. Her soul seemed to hear the voice of the Lord God walking

in the garden in the cool of the evening and calling to Eve hidden among the trees of the garden.

She did not take to herself the solace of blaming the serpent, but she felt that her brief term in paradise was over.

The boat forged on up the river and gave back the darkness, but the moon was not the same.

Then suddenly the quietude and the solitude were ruined again, cloven asunder as with a sword. A railroad train ripped through the gorge at their feet. It went by unseen, but it sent out a shower of sparks and a shrill escape of steam like the great hiss of an indignant world.

CHAPTER XXIV

THAT same night that same moon poured its influence upon a distant nickel-plated yacht steaming handsomely through an appropriately nickel-plated sea.

Jacob Schuyler had thought himself immensely clever when he devised the scheme of checkmating his headstrong daughter by kidnapping her. A small joke of his own usually lasted him a good while; and it had pleased him to shanghai his own child in his own yacht. But the humor had lost something of its edge in the course of a week at sea, especially since Muriel would not laugh. Also, Jacob had begun to think hard about his business, and to distrust his office subordinates.

His wife, too, was remembering a number of necessities that she had neglected in the haste of their departure, and neither her maid not Muriel's had a sea-going stomach. And of all tasks on earth old Mrs. Schuyler enjoyed least waiting on her own maid.

But Jacob had vowed not to go back until Muriel promised to give up her slum avocations. She had set that little square jaw of hers—a misses' size model of his own—and vowed that she would never make such a promise. It was a case of vow against vow, and whose was the frailer?

Meanwhile nobody on that pleasure-yacht was having any pleasure. Nobody could convince anybody of anything. Jacob and his wife could not persuade their child that they were acting for her best interests, and she could not persuade them to mind their own.

To-night the moon and the soft gale pleaded for recon-

ciliation, but Muriel would not surrender. The old people, grown somewhat to a dumpling shape, sat bunched in their big arm-chairs and watched that slim figure in the blown skirts leaning on the rail, her eyes clinging to the horizon like hands reluctant to let go.

Her parents watched her so fondly that they saw even the dim little tears that came forth and glistened on her eyelashes. Jacob called to her with the kindliness the moon inspired:

"What's the matter, honey?"

"Nothing, nothing, thank you."

"But you're crying, aren't you?"

"Not necessarily."

"I thought I saw tears in your eyes."

"It's the wind, I suppose; or the spray."

Mrs. Schuyler tried her luck:

"What are you thinking of, dearest?"

"Of nothing that interests you."

"Perhaps it would."

Muriel left the rail and flung herself into her own chair. "No! You have no hearts, either of you. My suffering doesn't interest you!"

That dealt them a stab indeed, the sharper than a serpent's stab of a thankless child. They left off asking her what she was thinking about. So she told them:

"I was thinking of what that poor Italian mother must feel in that awful tenement, wondering where her child is. And I was thinking of the child crying with fear and loneliness. And you won't let me go and find it!"

Susan pleaded: "We love you too well to let you mix yourself in this thing."

"Love me! And you break my heart? You make a brute of me, and a fool and a liar. You force me to abandon all those wretched people that trusted me."

"We're sorry for the poor souls, of course, my dear," Jacob urged. "How often have I told you that the

last thing I did was to telephone Chivot to do what he could?"

"Chivot!" she sniffed, and there was his epitaph in the sniff.

"Can't you understand, honey," Jacob pleaded, "that we're only guided by our love of you? We can't endure the thought of your going down into those hideous regions."

"They're not hideous. They're crowded, but so is a summer hotel. People are people there as well as anywhere."

"But it's not safe for you."

"Safe! Where is it safe, in this world or the next? If I'm never to go anywhere or do anything that isn't safe, I might as well jump overboard and get out of danger."

"But suppose, while you were trying to find that kidnapped boy, somebody kidnapped you?"

"O Lord! papa, don't, don't! You're not old enough for your second childhood. You talk of the East Side as if it were the Wild West in dime-novel days."

"Of course I do," said Jacob. "It's worse than Cripple Creek ever was."

"Those gunmen down there," Susan added, "would shoot the spurs off a cowboy bad man before he could draw his cayuse, or whatever it is they shoot with out there."

Muriel shook her head over the nursery ogre story. "Oh, Daddy, Mammy, naughty, naughty!"

"It's true!" said Jacob, angrily. "The papers are full of gunplay every day; yet they don't tell a tenth of it. The police don't want it on their records, and the papers won't print every bit of pop-gun practice at one of those obscure dances or gin-mills. The people they kill or maim are nobody much, anyway. But the hospitals can tell you a story. I'm on the board of two or three of 'em and I get the reports. Do you realize that hardly a night

passes without eight or ten people being brought in stabbed or shot or beaten up? Those Pike County and Black Hills fellows were nothing compared to New York. They didn't have people enough to shoot. New York is simply full of gunmen and knifemen and bomb-throwers."

"That makes it all the more attractive," said Muriel, with the gaiety of youth at the hint of adventure.

Jacob opened his mouth with a gasp, then clamped it on his cigar and spoke through his clenched teeth like a proper pirate.

"Well, mother, if that's the way she feels about it, we might as well head for Europe. I'll go arrange it with Björlin."

He slapped his hands on the arms of his chair and heaved himself erect with difficulty. He marched out, as he had done when a board of directors would not vote as he wished, and he left them dazed and disorganized to surrender and recall him.

Muriel was a bit dazed and disorganized herself. Ordinarily she had won her way in her conflicts with her father. Was she losing her grip?

Then her mother began on her: "Now I implore you not to oppose your father. He doesn't want to go to Europe now, and Heaven knows I can't bear the idea. But you're both so stubborn, you are killing me between you."

Muriel's resolution was unshaken. "I'm sorry, mother. There's no place I want to go less than to Europe. But I'd rather go to Africa than be bullied like this. I'm of age, and I won't be treated as a little girl."

In her desperateness Mrs. Schuyler had an inspiration: "I don't for a moment believe they have lost any boy at all. I'm perfectly sure they never had a boy to lose."

"Really, mother, you mustn't go crazy right before my eyes."

Mrs. Schuyler did not mind the sarcasm. She retorted:

"Oh, everybody's crazy but the young. But you'd better acquire a little of the common insanity of the rest of the grown-ups. Don't become eccentric, my child, whatever else you do. I'd almost rather have you fast than a crank. Fast people do reform sometimes, but cranks get worse and worse."

Muriel stared at her mother with all the disappointment children feel when their parents fall short of their ideals. Muriel thought, "Poor child!"

Her mother said: "Poor child!" and groaned, "I'm going to bed. Good night."

They kissed each other formally like women at war, and Mrs. Schuyler went to her cabin. The boat was rolling so that she progressed with a rather bibulous dignity. The moonlight seemed to be relieved when she took her cynical counsels away from its tenderness.

Muriel went back to the railing and resumed her study of the horizon. It seemed a pity that she should be alone and all that moonlight going to waste. But she was thinking of a young man, a young physician. She was thinking, "What is he thinking of me?" She felt sure that if he were thinking of her it was with bitter resentment.

CHAPTER XXV

HE was thinking of her and musing, "Is she thinking of me?" He was afraid that she had forgotten him as utterly as she had neglected him. He was looking at the same moon and wondering where she was.

Young Dr. Worthing had more than amorous reasons for asking information as to Muriel Schuyler's whereabouts. She had promised to telephone him the following day. The next morning there was no call.

"It's just a way she has," he pleaded to himself in her behalf. And she had such becoming ways that even this fault took on a charm because it was hers.

The second morning he was both hurt and alarmed. About noon he was sent for. The messenger could not pronounce the name of the visitor, but he called him a "wop." Worthing went down to the reception-room and was greeted with touching devotion by a man he had never seen.

Worthing knew him for an Italian by his trousers, which were too tight, too low in the waist, and too high at the ankles. He was fat and huge and his skin was like currant-jelly. There were traces of flour in his hair, and his finger-nails were snowed up with flour.

It was Angelillo senior and he wanted the ransom money. He had advertised in the paper as Worthing directed.

"To-day my telephone rings. Man says—Italian man says: 'For four t'ousan' dollar, you getta de boy back; notta de wan dam' cent smaller.' I says, 'Please, I cannot get so moch mawney!' He says, 'You cannot getta

de boy.' I says, 'Wait a minuto.' Click! telephone is stop, man gone. I say to telephone-girl, 'Queeck, where is dat las' number?' She says she doan' knaw."

"The police could make them hunt it up."

Mr. Angelillo's opinion of the police was expressed in a grimace of contempt.

Angelillo outlined his plan: "Police is no good. Plaina clothes is no good. Italiano to catch Italiano. First is de boy; to get my boy back to his mawther, I pay all what is ask of mawney. After, I find out who is keedanap my boy. I keel him—so!"

He drove an imaginary stiletto into an imaginary body with the greatest enthusiasm.

"When he is keel I take back my mawney and yours, and I pay you again what you geeve. See?"

Worthing smiled at the ingenious device. But he urged Angelillo to make one more effort to lower the demand, and Angelillo left him with some waning of enthusiasm, saying that he would return the next day.

Dr. Worthing felt that Muriel would want to learn the news. It was an excellent excuse for an interview. He telephoned the town house, and was told that she was on a yacht cruise. She had put to sea for an indefinite period without sending him a word! She had gone back to the upper air. Probably some super-rich lover or some visiting nobleman was engaging her thoughts with glittering courtship. Perhaps she was making a funny story of her little slumming excursion and mimicking the hospital interne she had dazzled for a few days just to see how foolish he would be.

Doctors must learn to deaden their feelings or they will perish. Worthing had learned to be calm under bitter ordeals. But Muriel had stabbed him in a chamber of his heart that had never been anesthetized, and he could not put his wincing soul into the twilight sleep.

Two days later Angelillo sought him out again. He had published another bid in the *Araldo* and in the dismal

auction with unseen bidders had brought the price of the boy down to twenty-five hundred dollars.

He called for the money. Worthing stared at him in open-jawed confusion. All the man wanted was twenty-five hundred dollars in cash. Worthing's total war fund amounted to about twenty-five dollars.

Angelillo mistook the reason of Worthing's embarrassment. He opened out his palm and rubbed his thumb across his finger-tips in the money-gesture and smiled:

"You lenda me twenta-fi' hondred. I pay. I grabba de boy, I stabba de man. See—like-a so! Ugh! Den I nabba de mon'."

There was all of sunny Italy in his smile. Worthing had a feeling that if he did not furnish the money, Mr. Angelillo would just as amiably push the stiletto into him.

As sometimes happens to people in desperate embarrassment, Worthing had resort to the last resort of too clever people, the truth. And as sometimes happens, the truth cleared the air somewhat and found credence and sympathy.

He told the poor father how he had been brought into the affair and how he had been deceived by the same pretty-faced glib promiser. He told all but her name. When Angelillo pleaded for that he said:

"I can't tell you. It wouldn't do any good. She's out of town." And then the fantastic notion came to him. "I don't believe she told me her real name."

After all, what evidence had he that the girl was Muriel Schuyler? He had found her in a car marked J. S., but that proved nothing. She might have been a maid, or a picked-up sweetheart of the chauffeur's. In his anger he twisted all the arguments awry and everything proved what he feared to have it prove.

His meekness and frankness and shame were so complete that Angelillo had mercy on him, forgave him, and resolved to go back to fight his battle in his own way.

He took from his pocket a dirty envelope, and from

that a sheet of cheap note-paper on which was printed some message. In it was a little curl of black hair.

"Dey senda me dees," he explained. "Eet is from Filippo's hairs. Dey say, eef no mawney come to-night, to-morrow dey senda me"—he paused and breathed hard —"dey senda me de leetla finger from his left hand by parcel posto. And de nex' day—*ancora uno digitto!*" The anguish on his face changed to unimaginable ire. "Eef dey do, by de body of Cristo, wan day I find deir boy and I do de same."

The fierce liquor of revenge sustained him as he turned away.

The next morning Worthing had a telephone message from the Assistant Commissioner on Ellis Island, asking him if Miss Schuyler had done anything about the appeal against the deportation of the Balinsky girl. Nothing had been turned in, and the time was short.

Worthing answered with a griding laugh: "Hah! She fooled you, too, did she?"

"I don't understand."

"Neither do I. Good-by!"

Misery loves company, and the Assistant Commissioner was welcome.

CHAPTER XXVI

TEN days after Muriel's disappearance, Dr. Worthing was called out to bring in the shredded victims of a dynamite accident in the Broadway Subway construction. He came back with a wagon-load of horrors and turned them over to a squad of surgeons and nurses.

When he had washed up and changed to his street clothes he was told that a young lady was waiting to see him. It was Muriel.

She rose and hurried to him with a little cry of delight that broke off short before the fierce anger of his glare.

"Didn't you get my telegram?" she asked.

"What telegram?" he groaned; she was so pretty it was a pity she must be so false.

"The one I gave the porter. He swore he'd send it. I hadn't time to send it myself and catch the train. I'll murder that black hound if I ever see him again."

Worthing tossed his head impatiently. Another of her stories was coming. It came. She told him of the tyranny of her atrocious father. She told him of her efforts to get word to him, to bribe a sailor, the wireless operator, anybody, to send him word.

They anchored now and then in various harbors while sailors were sent ashore for mail and newspapers and supplies. She tried to escape at every one, but the guard was too strict.

"They never went in close enough for me to swim, though, or I'd have tried it. The other day—it was my last chance, too—we were off Newport News, and the next stop was Europe. I caught a glimpse of a war-ship

there, and the Lord sent me a stroke of genius. Father and mother were playing bézique, the launch was ashore, and most of the sailors were asleep. I went into the navigating-room and found where it tells you about signal codes and things, and I got out the necessary pennants and made up a signal for 'Mutiny on Board. Send Help.'

"Nobody paid any particular attention to me so long as I was in plain view. I used to putter about the deck a good deal and learn the ropes. I generally ran up the colors and lowered them. So I made up a hoist and raised it and nobody on the yacht noticed it. Nobody on the war-ship noticed it, either, for the longest time.

"Then there was a sign of life on board and a lot of pointing. Finally I saw a cutter leaving her side. So I strolled up to my darling old dad and told him what I had done.

"He almost exploded. I told him that I was going to report that the yacht was engaged in the slave-carrying trade, and that I was the slave, white, of age, unmarried, and American, and I was being dragged away by force. So I had a right to call a policeman or a war-ship or the whole United States army.

"Well, father was ready to die. He loathes publicity, anyway, and he could see tons of it coming his way. I told him I would save him from every last smitch of trouble if he'd solemnly swear to quit trying to bully me and let me go ashore.

"He had nothing else to do, so he swore. Then when the cutter came alongside I met the officer and treated him as if I were very much surprised. He asked what the trouble was and I told him that everybody was well and happy; why? He explained about the signals and I pretended to be ready to drop. I told him it was all my fault. I had been getting up a little birthday dinner and I wanted to dress the ship. I had a lot of other flags I wanted to fly, and those were the first I found. We had

to muster the crew to convince him that everything was all right. Then I begged him to have tea—and he did. He was terribly disappointed at not being able to save anybody, but he was awfully nice—and very good-looking. I say, he was very good-looking."

She eyed Worthing closely to see if there were no jealousy in him. He was grimly trying to disbelieve the evidently concocted romance. He did not want to be jealous of an imaginary male beauty. He was icily insolent before her smile.

She was canny enough to see that his head was having a battle with his heart. She said:

"Could I bribe you to smile once for five thousand dollars?"

She produced the cash and spread it out before him. It was not stage money. If that were real, perhaps the rest of her story was. He stared into her eyes and saw nothing there but truth—though she had just finished telling him a story of her ingenious lies. But such lies did not, of course, count against her, since they were told in order to get back to him.

When she saw that he had relented she went on with the story of her hasty escape from the yacht. She would not wait to come back by sea, but rushed ashore. She described the telegram she had written, and reiterated her desire to murder the porter who pocketed the money, tip and all.

She talked at a lightning-express speed, and ended with a final rush like pulling into a station:

"And now tell me everything that's happened. I was so afraid about the poor Angelillo boy. Did Mr. Chivot accomplish anything? Of course not, but—oh, do tell me! You haven't said a word."

He told her what he knew of the kidnapped boy's affairs and he told her what he dreaded.

She was afire with terror and insisted on leaving at once for the Angelillo home. Worthing was not in a position to act upon his impulses as she on hers, but he managed

to compound an excuse that satisfied his chief. They set out together for Batavia Street, wondering what they might find there.

As they whirled into Batavia Street, where automobiles are not frequent, they came within an ace of smiting Happy Hanigan again.

He leaped to the curb in time and began to howl profanity.

"Where t'e hell yous goin'? Say! is dat you, Miss Schuyler? Well, I'll be— 'Scuse me."

His goblin wrath had changed instantly to a smile that would have been almost too sweet for a cherub; but his language preserved its habits.

Muriel hastened to get down from the taxicab and embrace her long-lost protégé. Happy winked across her shoulder at Worthing and said:

"Hey, Doc, toin your head de udder way. Don't you know how to act when a feller meets his goil?"

Worthing tried to smile, but Happy read his look aright.

"Looky at him, darlin', he's green with chealousness."

Muriel surprised the blush that ran across Worthing's face. Then one ran across her own. Then she became intensely interested in Happy's condition.

"We're coming up to see you just as soon as we've had a little talk with Mrs. Angelillo about her boy."

Muriel flashed up the dingy stairway, an angel fresh from heaven in robes fresh from Paris.

When Muriel entered the Angelillo cavern she was stared at first with superstitious unbelief and then glared at with superstitious recognition. They laid upon her shoulders the blame for the ills that preceded her first arrival in their life as well as those that followed. They accused her of the Evil Eye, the cruelest folly that has survived from the old demonic lore.

They made the sign of protection against the Jettatura

and motioned her away. Worthing had prepared her for such a reception and she had composed in the back of her head a little *apologia* in her best Italian.

She reeled it off now and won past their wrath. The most convincing sign of all was the brandishing of the actual money. She allowed them to touch those almost omnipotent green wafers and they recognized their uncanny power.

The thousand-dollar bills excited an almost overwhelming emotion in the young man whom Muriel had met before. Gemma introduced him as her husband. He was an Italian of the type that has no Italian feature. At home his name was Nunzio Mangianello; abroad he called himself "Mike Kelley" for short. He was of a basking nature, and before he married Gemma had been content to borrow a street-piano and play the troubadour for a day or two, earning enough to keep him alive the rest of the week. He had slept upon green bananas, aiding them to ripen with his own warm nature.

He had easily won the green-banana soul of Gemma, and then had settled down as a basker in the Angelillo home. What little he earned he spent in gambling, preferably at the noble game of stuss—a game which some anonymous genius improved with a wonderful feature: the house pays back to the man who has lost his entire fortune a large enough percentage to pay his car-fare home. This encourages the timid gambler to risk everything, in the calm assurance that he can never be entirely wiped out.

The stuss-house which Nunzio chiefly honored with his patronage was more or less concealed in Allen Street, and presided over with more or less police permission by "Shang" Ganley, one of the most eminent gunmen of the lower East Side. And this gunman's more or less official wife was the versatile little brick-topped imp generally known as "Red Ida."

Nunzio had poured into the sympathetic ears of the

Ganleys his first grief at the kidnapping of his tiny brother-in-law Filippo. He had been sincerely grieved by the loss of the little fellow and had moved the gunman and Red Ida to facile tears.

When Muriel disappeared her treachery was mourned in the stuss-house and voted a dirty trick. And now that she had come back Nunzio could hardly possess his soul in patience till the chance came to take the splendid news to his sympathetic friends in Allen Street.

Gemma could give no news of Filippo save that he was alive. He had printed them a few little notes pleading for rescue. The father was ransacking the town for him, and was even now in the Little Italy far up-town, prowling through areaways and back yards.

Learning that he would not be back for two hours or more, Muriel and Worthing determined to take Happy Hanigan to the great surgeon whose new operation promised to straighten his twisted spine.

CHAPTER XXVII

MURIEL was like a young girl running along a bleak mountainside hunting out the sparse flowers and never dreaming of the lurking rattlesnakes, cynical, ungrateful, unapproachable with kindliness. She was making a lark out of charity, glowing warmly through the winter of pain like another April. This surely was the way that charity should be ministered—with eagerness and laughter and quick tears. Thus taken, it became the best of all sports, a gambling game with stakes well won or well lost as the die might turn.

She found Mrs. Hanigan at home, brushing Happy's hair and washing the back of his neck for company. He had just emerged from the wash-boiler still steaming on the wet floor, and had not yet arrived inside a clean shirt. He modestly sought concealment behind a cupboard door, but Muriel caught a glimpse of him stripped to the waist. She closed her eyes, not with shame, but with pity for those clay-pipe arms and that pitiful twisted back and that big neckless head. He looked like a waxen torso half collapsed.

She turned away as he fought into his shirt, but she heard his groans of distress and his muffled oaths of impatience. When the shirt was tucked in and buttoned up he came forward with his hair askew, but his big smile in full working order. His mother belabored his head with the hair-brush and added the finishing touches while he tried to shake hands round her.

"You're going with us to the doctor, aren't you?" Muriel asked. and he grinned.

"I'd go almost any place wit' you, darlin'."

"Mickeen!" his mother gasped; "such talk you have!" She turned to Muriel. "You mustn't mind his lip, ma'am dear; he has the good heart within."

"I love his lip," said Muriel. "He's the bravest man I know."

"Ah, the Lord love you," cooed Mrs. Hanigan. "I'm after tellin' him he'll be the straightest lad in the Four Baronies whin the docther is through with him. He wasn't so strahng for the idea at first, but the pain grows on him that bad, sure every breath is the pullin' of a tooth."

They went down the steps slowly, Happy hobbling with senile awkwardness. The pride of riding in an automobile was the best of tonics.

They arrived up-town finally at their destination. Dr. Eccleston's office was wherever there was super-surgery to perform, but he made his headquarters in a twelve-story structure devoted entirely to physicians. It was a kind of mixture of hospital, apartment-house, and office-building. Everything was white and cornerless, aseptic and microscopically clean. The elevator-boy was in white and looked as if he had just been sterilized. As they went up they saw a trained nurse on every floor. There was a kind of sacredness about it to Muriel, a temple of science with a priestcraft of suspicion instead of faith, of warfare against the invisible fiends, with the knife instead of prayer.

They found Dr. Eccleston just leaving for one of the hospitals where he worked gratis for the love of his art.

Miss Schuyler's name and her plea made him turn back. He left her in the reception-room and went into his own office with Happy and Dr. Worthing and a trained nurse.

Muriel remained alone with the doleful reading-matter one finds on the table in a doctor's waiting-room—chosen, perhaps, with a view to making one more willing to see him.

When at last Eccleston came in with Dr. Worthing Happy was not with them.

"Tell me, doctor," Muriel gasped, eager to know the worst. "Is there any hope for him?"

"Every hope." He did not voice his mental reservation, "And no certainty."

"Oh, that's glorious," Muriel faltered in a broken voice, ambiguous between giggling and sobbing. Her lips were curved up, but the tears were dripping down. "Just what is the m-matter with the poor child?"

"Just what Dr. Worthing here suspected," the older man said with professional chivalry. "The boy is suffering from the disease named after old Percival Potts, and his relief is the new Albee operation."

Muriel made a face of repugnance: "What an awful fate—to have a disease or an operation named after you!"

Worthing sighed: "I wish to the Lord I could have a little of that fate. I'd rather discover the boundaries of a disease than find the north pole, and I'd rather invent a cure for it than all the airships in the world."

On Worthing's face a holy fervor supplanted his usual severity. Muriel had not thought of him as a crusader.

"Well, if it's all so beautiful," she said, "tell me about it. Is it terrible and will it hurt?"

Dr. Eccleston thought of his appointments, but he pushed a chair at Worthing and sat on another.

"The boy is suffering from a tubercular condition of the spine. It will get worse and worse; he will grow more and more bent; his gait will be more awkward; his breathing more painful; his lungs will be eventually affected."

"But the operation—is it very dreadful?"

"Not at all," said Eccleston, with the cheerfulness of a surgeon—the least contagious cheerfulness in the world. "It's what an architect would call an amusing piece of work. Would you like me to tell you about it?"

"Yes," she said, with rash curiosity.

He produced a pencil and made rapid sketches on his

prescription pad. The vertebræ looked like battalions on a military map. "You see, here's a normal spine. Here's where the trouble begins. These vertebræ began to break down. This is the way Happy's spine looks now." He sketched a battle-line driven in at its center. "You see it's bending under the weight, it's slipping, it's hurting his lungs. Now it has been discovered that if these bones can be held fast they will get well. But it is difficult to rig up a scaffolding inside your back here, or to fasten girders and beams to your spine."

"I should think so," Muriel said, feebly, trying not to faint and wondering why all this should be so peculiarly dreadful. Eccleston did not realize the strain she was under, and went gaily on with a scientist's impersonal interest.

"Now Dr. Albee, who has a kind of a gift for carpentry, worked up a neat little scheme for strengthening that spine with a bone graft, a piece of the shin about eight inches long."

"Whose shin?" Muriel whispered.

"The patient's, of course," said Eccleston. "Albee invented beautiful little electric motor saws and drills, and he makes the bone pliable with several slight incisions on the under side, the way a carpenter bends a board—like this.

"First, of course, he has laid bare the spinal column as far as necessary to include one good vertebra at either end of the bad ones. Then with a special chisel and mallet he splits each of these spinous processes down about half an inch, forming a kind of a furrow along here. He gets out his shin-bone cleat and sets it in here, straightens it all as much as he can, fastens it together with kangaroo tendons, and closes it up. And that's all there is to it. Exquisite, isn't it?"

He turned to Muriel for approval, but she was wavering and ashen. Eccleston sighed.

"I always forget." He called to the nurse to fetch some aromatic spirits of ammonia, and Muriel was soon

in better command of herself. But her imagination was the more alive.

"It's frightful, it's pitiful; it will hurt," she wailed.

"It hurts him now, my dear," said Worthing, seizing her hand and crushing it with a helpful pressure. The words and the act were but a physician's habit, yet they had a sudden personal significance to these two.

Still she hunted for arguments against the hateful deed. "But he would be a long, long while getting well—if he got well—wouldn't he?"

"Five or six months or so."

She groaned at the vision; but Worthing urged: "It's shorter than a lifetime, isn't it? The pain of breathing would be ended almost at once. He would be kept on a special fracture bed for six or eight weeks. Then he would begin to walk about a little."

"How could he walk with his shin gone?"

"That would be all grown up again by then."

"It would?"

"Yes, Nature has invented the only self-repairing engines on the market. She only wants a chance. This is Happy's chance to live long, to grow to manhood and perhaps to some great career."

She stared at him in amazement. "You advise it, then?"

"Of course."

She fired her last shot: "But you couldn't tell Happy about it and you wouldn't dare attempt it without his consent."

"I've told Happy," said Worthing.

"Oh!" She shuddered through all her being. "Did he faint, as I want to?"

"He was tickled to death. I think he's a little conceited about it."

The two physicians chuckled. But Muriel began to cry softly, almost silently, like a summer rain. She was ashamed and hid her face in her handkerchief. She heard that impudent voice at the door:

"Say, who t'e hell's been hoitin' me lady frien'?"

She looked up and saw Happy, not in the costume he had worn, but in a nightgown. He had been stripped for the examination and he had decided to stay here to be made ready for the inquisition.

Muriel ran to him, dropped on one knee, and clasped him in her arms as if he were a crippled child of her very own. He caressed her awkwardly and smiled with pride as she mumbled, "Oh, Happy! Happy!"

"Dat's me name, darlin'. Say, I've just found out I'm built like a motor-car. Cheese! I never knowed dey was so much machinery inside o' me. But I gotta back into de garadge and be coupled up better. Dis big old stoigeon here is goin' at me wit' a ax and a monkey-wrench and take me all apart and put me togedder again. It's grand. When I come out I'll be able to lick anybody dat can make me weight."

"You poor, brave, blessed child, to think what you must go through!"

"It ain't what a guy goes t'rough so much as where he comes out at," said the gutter philosopher. "What I'm goin' t'rough every day ain't no cinch, and it ain't gettin' me nowheres."

But Muriel could not smile. Happy stared at her with a new pride. It was encouraging to be felt sorry for by such a being as this. It was he that tried to comfort her.

"Dey's one t'ing I'd like to ast you, darlin'," he said. "Before dey begin woik on me insides dey put me out wit' some kind of gas. If you was to be wit' me and kind o' hold on to me hand and let me down easy I—I'd not be so scared. I don't want to git scared. I'd like me mudder dere, but she's had trouble enough, and she'd be scareder dan what I was. Maybe you wouldn't like it yourself."

"I'll be there," said Muriel.

"Fine for you! I knew I could depend on you. De game begins to-morra mornin' oily."

"I'll be there," said Muriel.

"And say—whisper!" He glared at the bystanders till they turned away, then he lowered his voice and set his big mouth against her little ear and murmured: "When I git straight I'm not gona be no shofure. Umpumm. I'm gona be a stoigeon. I'll have a office like dis and I'll straighten out everybody I can git me hands on. I'll make a lot o' money, too, and if—if nobody ain't ast you to marry him by dat time, why I'll—I'll—I'll take care of you meself."

"Splendid!" said Muriel.

Then the nurse took him by the hand and he was led away.

When he had gone Muriel, in a swirl of confused emotions, assailed the surgeon:

"Promise me you'll be gentle with him. Don't hurt him any more than you have to. And if there's anything—anything that will help him or make him comfortable or happy let him have it—no matter what it costs. Understand, no matter what it costs. I have the money."

"I understand. I promise."

Then she left him, feeling that she had lent the boy to the little death of science and wondering how he should be returned, if at all. She leaned rather heavily on Worthing's arm, and she said:

"Won't Mr. Merithew be happy when he learns that his money has saved the Italian boy, and paid for Happy besides!"

Worthing made a choking sound that she mistook for assent.

"I must telephone poor Mr. Merithew the minute I leave the Angelilli. I had an engagement with him and broke it, just as I did yours, without sending him word. I seem to be always doing the most dreadful things."

On the way back to Batavia Street to the Angelillo home, Dr. Worthing was his gruffest self again. Muriel made up her mind that he was a person of the most unaccountable moods.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CLOTHES need clothes. The fig-leaf demanded the flax-plant, and the flax-plant called for the mulberry-tree and its denizens.

Maryla had thought that if she could only possess one beautiful gown she would be content. She paid herself as the price and found that she had only paid an instalment on an indefinite obligation. For that handsome gown cried out for shoes and stockings, gloves, and a hat and a cloak and a coach. And that gown would not work all of the time; and it would not alternate with shabby clothes.

People in town cannot be like the Mexican *vaquero* who spends a hundred dollars on a lifelong hat and goes barefoot in ragged breeches. So Maryla was already perishing for more dresses.

But she did not tell Perry Merithew so. When she could not wear her finery she made excuses for staying indoors rather than sober the Merry Perry with prayers for further outlay.

This was to her credit with Perry, for he had found the cry for money increasingly intolerable. It is the least attractive song that Love can sing. Cupid is no cash-boy to come at the word. He hates it.

Having got one gown, the lowly Maryla thought she would be happy with just one more. "Pet" Bettany, who was drifting downward from the highest cloud as Maryla was pushing up from the loam, could have told her that there was no such thing as gowns enough. Pet Bettany had dozens of gowns, she owed for a score, she had

even paid cash for some of them, and still she voiced the wail far older than Flora McFlimsey's of Madison Square.

Pet had told Perry that night at the Yacht Club, "All women are grafters." She had grafted her father almost into his grave, her mother into gilded insolvency, and every dressmaker and milliner she could wheedle into as large an account as he would credit her with.

And still she had nothing to wear. She had "borrowed" money from women and from men; she had pawned family jewels to throw a little sop to her creditors. Now the impertinent hounds were whining for money and were refusing to drag her dog-cart farther.

When she saw Perry Merithew slip bills into the hand of Muriel Schuyler she rejoiced. She saw a chance to collect a little hush-money. She never dreamed that the cash was meant for charity. That did not resemble the Perry Merithew she knew at all. When she spoke to him he called her a little blackmailer and refused to lend her a penny. She laughed ominously and prepared to bide her time.

And then she was thrown into a state of desperation. She was invited to spend a fortnight as one of the sixty guests at one of the Newport palaces during tennis week and horse-show week. Also there would be luncheons, teas, and tea dances, and there would be big dinners and Sardanapalian nights. These things needed many costumes, and they must all be new.

More harrowing still, the great Mrs. Nicolls, whose son, "Winnie," Pet was conspiring to make a bridegroom *malgré lui*—the great Mrs. Nicolls announced that she would give a wonderful costume fête to christen the new ball-room she had added to her château.

Mysteriously the newspapers learned the details and published them ten days before. The ball-room was to be presented as the depths of the sea, with a blue-green satin ceiling for the top of the water and a ship's hull

floating in it. Grottoes and cliffs would furnish the walls, and the guests were requested to appear as some form of sea life—mermen, mermaids, mer-old-maids, nymphs, fishes, lobsters, eels, flowers, shells, froth.

The proclamation set fancy afire.

Mrs. Nicolls included the Bettanys, *mère et fille*, in the bead-roll of invitation, an intensely exclusive list of only five hundred names.

Mrs. T. J. B. sighed over the cardboard and said: "I don't know whether the old cat meant this as a compliment or as a challenge. Pet darling, we can't dream of going, of course. She knows we can't afford clothes to wear on the street, to say nothing of submarine flummery. You won't mind missing it, will you?"

And Pet had answered: "Not the least dambit, dear. I don't care any more for that than I do for my right eye. I'll go if I have to sell my left leg."

"But how, dear child? How?"

"Watch my work," said Pet. "If I can't beg, borrow, or steal some duds I'll go as Venus rising from the sea."

Miss Bettany set out like a gorgeous panhandler to beg a dole from some of her tailors. She swallowed her pride and truckled to people whom under ordinary circumstances, to use her own phrase, she "wouldn't wipe her boots on."

But the Bettanys were notoriously in hot water. Their commercial rating was of the lowest, their liabilities of the highest. Even tailors reach a point where credit cannot be extended. Pet had a bad half-day of it. She felt a sincere contempt for tradesmen who insisted upon collecting.

She tried to make up with Dutilh, with whom she had quarreled a year before because he threatened to sue her. With a heart full of bile and of guile she sauntered in and told the icy wretch that she had decided to forgive him and give him another chance.

Dutilh, with an ominous sweetness, answered: "I am so glad! I am desperately in need of cash. Did you bring the check with you?"

She haughtily damned his impudence and walked out. Her heart was black with rage and shame and baffled desire.

Then her heart leaped. There was a Providence, after all. In a clump of vehicles held up by a traffic policeman she saw a limousine of a hunter's-green color. Lolling inside, reading a book as if in his own library, was Perry Merithew.

Pet opened the door, got in, sat down beside him, and gurgled like a sweet little girl:

"Hello!"

Perry was startled, then amused, then embarrassed. He was on his way to Maryla.

"Take me for a little ride, there's a darling," said Pet. "Better yet, take me home and I'll give you a drink."

"Thanks," said Perry. "I'm late to another date."

"With Muriel Schuyler?" said Pet. "Take me along for chaperon."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, stop it!" said Perry. "I'll drop you at your house."

"You can't shake me so easily," said Pet, putting her feet up on the little flap-seat.

He sighed and shook his head in helpless fury.

"Perry, boy," she said, "I'm frantic. I've got to make a raise somewhere."

"So have I. I've just been trying to touch a few friends myself. Everybody is poorer than I am, and I'm a pauper."

"You have money enough for Muriel Schuyler."

Perry gnashed his teeth, then spoke earnestly:

"Pet, I'll tell you the truth; I gave her some money for a charity."

"You being the charity," Pet grinned. "Well, I'm a charity, too."

"I borrowed the money to give her."

"Borrow me some."

"I promised to pay it back to-day and—well, my ship didn't come in."

"You'll have to do better than that, old top."

"I've told you the truth, and if you don't believe it you can—"

"No, I'll go ask Muriel," said Pet, grimly. "Maybe she'll scare easier than you do. She's got a reputation to lose. You haven't." He did not speak. She pressed the threat. "I mean it. I'm going to Muriel Schuyler."

Perry laughed. "You're a good swimmer, but I doubt if you can make it. She's on her father's yacht."

"When does she get back?"

"I don't know. I had an engagement with her. She chucked it. Didn't even send me a word. That shows how I stand with her. You're welcome to anything you can get out of her."

"I'll just call that little bluff," said Pet. "Let me out."

"Sha'n't I take you home?"

"This is her street. Let me out."

Perry signaled his chauffeur to draw up to the curb, and handed Pet to the pavement with a low sweep of his hat. He laughed ironically as she walked away fuming.

She rang the Schuyler bell, and received a confirmation of Perry's words. She stalked home in a daze of cold ire. She had her heart set on the fortnight at Newport, but she told her mother that she would give all the other nights and ten years off her life for a chance to glitter at Mrs. Nicolls's memorable ball *Au Fond de la Mer*. Pet called it, "*au fond de l'enfer*."

She sat in her exquisite boudoir in her expensive inner sheaths and flung her expensive hair-brush at her costly Pekingese, and bewailed the horrors of poverty. She called her mother and father names. She dared Muriel Schuyler to show her face in New York.

EMPTY POCKETS

When Muriel stole back to town and made haste not to the under-sea festival, but to the underworld tragedy, Pet did not know of her return.

Besides, there were other persons interested in getting money from Muriel. And they saw her first.

CHAPTER XXIX

LITTLE Mrs. Ida Ganley, the wife of the stuss-dealer who got most of Nunzio's money, was one of those strange submarine curiosities that the cabaret craze dredged up from the depths of an otherwise hopeless obscurity.

The public whim for enduring singing and dancing with its meals and turning every restaurant into a vaudeville house, had given employment and publicity to thousands of singers and dancers whom, else, the dark unfathomed caves of oblivion would have had to bear. Personalities too frail to have stood the calcium of the stage passed muster among the tables or on the platforms while the dishes clattered.

And so Mrs. Ganley, wife of a cheap gambler, and hitherto known only among the police as a pickpocket, was now "an artist," and was actually receiving pay for diverting attention from the cuisine to her own charms.

She had not as yet worked up to a down-town restaurant; she sang among the higher numerals in an establishment purveying chop-suey chiefly, and other Chinese fodder. It happened to be near the apartment-house where Perry Merithew had established Maryla—a region too far north for his friends to penetrate. Perry was gradually educating Maryla up to the better restaurants. He had not yet educated her up to the maxixe or to a sense of the joy of life. Her somber beauty still enthralled him, and her childlike wonder at the tritest things. Also she was glowing with the bliss of wearing that wonderful gown from Paris *via* Dutilh's.

Maryla watched Red Ida with amazement as the little demon leaned against the piano in the middle of the crowded tables and sang a highly moral song with this refrain of unusually keen philosophy:

Daon't blay-mit tall on Broar-dway;
Yew have yewrself to blame.
Daon't shame the name of dear aold Broar-dway,
For in any other town it's [gulp] just the same.
Yewr life is whawt yew ma-kit,
When yew try to toin nigh tin tew day,
And if yew should be dineeng with a lit-til stran-jar,
Red lights seem tew warn yew of a dan-jar,
Doan't blay-mit tall on Broar-dway!

Perry Merithew was bored by this didactic lyric, in which Maryla found deep solemnities. He found more pleasure in the encore, a more Ida-esque satire of a young man who took his girl out for a bright evening and bought her an ice-cream soda, winning from her this withering comment:

If that's your idea of a wonderful time,
Take me home!
You came out with a one-dollar bill;
You've got eighty cents left of it still.
If that's your idea of a wonderful time,
Take me home!

That was not Perry Merithew's idea of a wonderful time, but even Red Ida could see that he was having difficulty in spending much money on Maryla.

The next day Red Ida was telling her gunman consort of Perry Merithew's waste of cash and courtesy. The gunman was a very liberal-minded man and made no petty objections to his wife's extra-mural adventures.

And then Nunzio Mangianello appeared with the sensational news of the reapparition of the millionairess and her amazing display of thousand-dollar bills and diamonds.

Red Ida was at home when he arrived and she was as delighted as if the stolen child were her own.

She was consumed with anxiety as to the name of the rich "dame." Nunzio could not enlighten her. But Ida was willing to bet that if she laid eyes on her she would know who she was. She was not only a close student of the society columns and the picture supplements in which women of wealth rival actresses and politicians in the frequence of their appearance, but also Ida was a singer in the cabarets where at times the strolling aristocracy condescended to dine and even to dance.

Trade was dull in the stuss line that afternoon, and when Nunzio spoke of Muriel's promise to return at three o'clock Red Ida and her man decided to stroll down to Batavia Street and give her a look-over.

Ida's husband had been growling about the perfection of the Italian Black Hand syndicates and their ability to wring thousands of dollars from apparent paupers by the arts of bomb-placing, child-stealing, and horse-poisoning.

It seemed a shameful lack of American enterprise to leave this rich field to the "wops."

As he and his Ida sauntered down the crowded lanes that led to Batavia Street his brain was shuffling schemes so dazzling that he dared not mention them even to a sprite so audacious as Ida.

They found their way to Batavia Street and eventually a hackney motor rolled up and emitted a young man who helped out a young woman.

Red Ida knew Muriel instantly from her numberless pictures in the newspapers. She seized her man by his needle-scarred forearm and whispered:

"My Gawd, that's Muriel Schuyler! Her old man's woith a billion dollars."

In the stormy brain-cell of the gunman there rose a challenging question:

"Why not?"

RED IDA knew Muriel instantly from her numberless Schuyler. Her old man's woith a billion dollars."

ures in the newspapers. She whispered: "That's Muriel

CHAPTER XXX

HERE was Jacob Schuyler's daughter in the humble lane called Batavia; she was stepping out of a shabby public motor in front of a shabbier tenement. When she disappeared inside it, Ida's first comment was on the modesty of her dress and her behavior:

"If you didn't know her you'd never know her, would ya? She's dressed like she was nobody at tall. My Gawd! if my old man was woith what hers is I'd be so plastered with di'mond sunboists you'd think I was a three-alarm fire. I'd have a poil in every pore."

But Shang was not listening. An idea had come to him in a dazzling blaze like a wave of lightning. He felt that it was too big a thought to think unaided; he must have help, and he sent his trembling hands searching through his pockets.

There was something reptilian in Shang. He slid through the underbrush of life, keeping close to the ground, carrying a hint of clamminess and venom.

Ida was a bird, a flitting, squeaking, chirping, malapert song-sparrow. She had always held herself cheap, sold herself cheap, or given herself away. Her ambition was to attract attention, to be known in successive seasons as "the limit," "a hot tamale," "the candy kid," "some baby."

She was as common as chewing-gum and as restless as her own jaws. She chewed her chewing-gum with a swagger, open-mouthed, cud-rolling. She was "out for a good time." Her motto was, "I'll try anything once."

She had always been what is called "wicked," and there was no more profit in becoming excited over her than in regretting the incorrigible frivolity of every dirty little English sparrow. There are thousands of her in New York, and in every other town in proportion. They flock along the streets, picking up a precarious living, little, noisy, flippantly flirting their skirts like tails, cocking their heads, taunting the other birds.

When Ida walked abroad she was followed by a cloud of perfume and a trail of chatter of "I seen" and "I done" and "I says to him" and "he says to me." When Ida was putting on style she said, "'N' I says to him you gotta choose between she and I." She had discovered that the objective case is improper. So she said "between she and I," which was twice as elegant as the diction of those of her acquaintance who said "between her and I."

Poor little thing! She tried so hard to be somebody and she realized that some mysterious quality was lacking. Despite her passion for elegance, the very word "elegant" became plebeian in her voice. She and her sort, struggling to be ladylike, have driven the very word "lady" almost into disrepute.

Ida was petite without grace. She was so slim that she was almost impossible. Yet she did not suggest hunger or emaciation. She was carved like a Chippendale spindle; all the curves were there, but to the last degree attenuate.

She was as lithe as a skein of spaghetti, yet her sinuous carriage was not graceful; it was rather disgraceful, bantering, hinting, accosting.

Ida would have been a perfect example of the influence of home life on character if it had not been for her virtuous sister Edna. As Ida once weepingly explained to her first police matron: "Pa was a bum, and ma was a mutt, and we was brang up in Flatbush. Who wouldn't 'a' went wrong?"

Shang Ganley was about the only person on earth that

Ida was afraid of. Perhaps that was why she loved him —if that elastic word can be stretched to include the loose and intermittent interest she took in her husband.

Shang differed from Ida in coming from a respectable and comfortable home. Like her, he was of the pure American stock, which, contrary to a flattering legend, furnishes most of our criminals. Shang's mother had lavished devotion upon him; his father had spared neither the rod nor good counsel. An education had been forced upon him by the generous community. Truant officers had seen to it that he reached school occasionally. But somehow in the mystery of character Shang was born wrong.

He came early into conflict with the state. The recording angel at the police bureau showed a surprising knowledge of his deeds.

Shang's crimes had been humble—sticking up a barroom and emptying a cash-register; smashing a small jeweler's window, or rifling the pockets of a drunken dreamer. One desperate thing he had done—he had killed young Dopey Jahelka. It was in a quarrel over Ida, aggravated by a quarrel over the rebate, or "vigresh," that Dopey claimed after a game of stuss at Shang's joint. Dopey had called Shang various names that were probably deserved, but all the more unbearable. He had also held Shang by the neck and jabbed his fingers in his eyes, and then carried off all the money he could find.

Shang got him a week later, after a dance, shot him in the back and ground his heel in his face. Jahelka thought he would recover and be able to make his own reprisals; he refused to mention his assailant by name. He died suddenly, to his great surprise and Shang's great relief. Shang married Ida so that she could not be forced to testify against him.

The police were so glad to be rid of Jahelka that they wasted little time trying to fasten the operation on

Shang. They annoyed him, however, and hampered his prosperity.

But now Muriel Schuyler suggested a way to crown his career. She was Opportunity knocking at his door. She must be seized with speed and yet with caution. He must think hard and fast, then jump.

He looked up and down the street; there was no one in sight except the driver of the motor that had brought Miss Schuyler, and that man was faced the other way.

Shang stepped behind a wooden stoop. He was still ransacking his pockets with shivering hands. Failing to find what he sought, he turned his attention to a large signet ring he wore. He slipped it from his finger and was about to lift the top of it when Ida understood his purpose.

"Ah, cut that out!" she snapped and tried to knock the ring from his hand.

He turned on her with a flash of ferocity so like the snarl of a hyena that she fell back. He raised a hinged lid in the ring and disclosed a tiny compartment filled with white powder. He shook some of it out on the back of one wrist and giggled.

"Have a little snow?"

"Nagh!" she sneered, with disgust.

"You don't know what's good for you," he urged with the proselytizing fervor of the true victim.

She turned away and he raised his wrist to his nose and snuffed up the drug with nostrils quivering greedily as a terrier's.

Immediately he was renewed. His face, tortured with craving, grew human again. He put back his ring and tapped it gratefully. "The cold medicine's the only t'ing when you got a job of t'inkin' on."

"It's got you cold all right, all right," Ida grumbled. "You used to sell it and make a lot o' money; now you sniff it all yourself."

He smiled with angelic superiority.

"Don't you worry about money, honey. I'm workin'

out a little scheme dat 'll make more money dan all de coke-shovers and heroin-rollers ever dreamed of. If it don't make us a million dollars apiece I'll pay you a—a hundred t'ousan' dollars forfeit."

"If you'll forfeit me me car-fare home I'll be satisfied," said Ida.

"You come along wit' me and I'll ride you home in a areaplane."

She went with him in a kind of dogged devotion, not to share his glory, but to support him when the rosy clouds should change, as always, to iron clamps about his head.

CHAPTER XXXI

IDA'S legs were so brief and her skirts so tight, and Shang's flight so rapid, that she had almost to hop sparrow-like to keep pace with him.

He led her to James Street and turned southeast. He paused at a "Sporting Barber Shop" in a sharp-nosed building shaped like an ax-head, and nodded to a handsome youth just arisen from the barber's chair. It was "Pepsin Chu," a strange compound of races. His father had been a Chinese importer with a shop in Mott Street, a quiet and dignified person with a weakness for playing *pie gow*. When the Italians began to crowd into the Chinese district he had found a neighboring Calabrian girl attractive and she found him fascinating in a terrifying sort of way. The opposition to such alliances had died out with their increasing frequence, and the condescension was probably as great on one side as the other. In any case, the young wife was well housed and she wept when her husband was hatcheted to death in the war of the Four Brothers with the On Leon Tong. Mrs. Chu Jett, *née* Margherita Turiello, was left with a curious child of almond eyes and olive skin. She abandoned him to the Four Brothers to take care of and vanished with a Neapolitan youth who sang stale fish for sale in a luscious tenor.

"Pepsin" grew up, anyhow. He acquired his nickname from being arrested at the age of seven in full flight with a jar of pepsin gum that he had stolen from a fruit-stand.

Shang nodded to Pepsin to follow him, and Pepsin dropped alongside, casting his glances like fish-lines

toward Ida, who flirted perilously back at him around the profile of her spouse. Finally Pepsin nudged Shang.

"Why'n't you tip me off to the new baby?"

"New nothin'; it's me wife!"

"I ain't particular," said Pep.

"I don't care who I meet, neither," laughed Ida, and this served for an introduction.

Shang strode along with his head in the clouds, seeing nothing, hearing nothing.

Shang was looking for "Kill Papa," a Greek friend of his. He marched up and down Cherry Street from "The Jolly Albanians" to the "Xenodocheion of Gortyna." He glanced into various shops with signs in letters that would have made Socrates feel at home till he tried to recognize the words. He would have understood that a lodging-house was still ΞΕΝΟΔΟΧΕΙΟΝ; but, never having heard of coffee, what would he have made of a ΚΑΦΦΕΝΕΙΟΝ? Never having dreamed of cigars, what would he have expected to buy in a "smoke shop" (ΚΑΠΝΟΠΩΛΕΙΟΝ)?

Shang quested among the Greeks till he stumbled across his man, a brutally beautiful demigod-satyr whose real name was Achilles Papademetrakopoulos, a leisurely Brooklyn Bridge of a name, shortened by his friends to the startling title of "Kill Papa."

Achilles was a bad Greek. He had been started wrong. His father was a florist, like so many American Greeks, and the boy had acquired in that ruthless trade the habit of destruction.

Now Achilles had a "fleet" of his own. It was not in any sense a rival of the older, more-established gangs like the Hudson Dusters, the Gophers of Hell's Kitchen, or the grim White Roses. But it was young yet. It was known as an Association, and it gave occasional public excursions and dances, at which some one was pretty apt to be shot up or down.

He found Achilles buying his groceries at a Zacharo-

plasteion and persuaded him to go to the back room of a dingy Kaffeneion.

Achilles did not drink or smoke or snuff, nor did he gamble. He had no small vices except picking his teeth in public.

However, he was a gracious host, and asked, magnificently: "What 'll it be? A little Chian wine for the lady?"

"A lot o' beer for the lady," said Ida.

"The same for mine," said Pep; "wit' a low collar."

Shang declined to mix his stimulants, and as soon as the doleful attendant had moved out to the sidewalk he outlined his great dream.

Shang described Muriel's wealth and her importance to her parents. It made him furious that she should expect to come down here with five thousand dollars to spend on a Dago brat. Shang said that he could buy a million of them for ten cents.

Achilles's toothpick reflected his intense meditation. It drooped from his upper lip when he felt helpless before this opportunity and realized the hazards; it was like a tiny mast when he thrust his lower lip out with resolution. He said—and spoke the same speech as Pep Chu and Shang Ganley, since he had learned the same language in the same streets:

"You're dead right, Ganley. We got a right to take dat money away from dat baby before she spends it foolish. And we gotta learn her to stay up-town in her own ward. Besides, de dope I read in de papers says her old man stole his money off de common people, and we got a right to take it back."

Pepsin was skeptical. "Fine and dandy, but how we gona collect it?"

Achilles carelessly tossed off a plan of campaign. "A daylight hold-up and a taxicab get-away looks good to me."

Shang seconded him: "Dat's what I was just gona tell you." Like a true author, he was afraid to lose the credit of his invention.

But it was not to the liking or the prestige of the tooth-picking Achilles to accept a scheme from one of his retainers without bettering it.

His thick black eyebrows met and jostled together like two big caterpillars disputing a leaf.

Eureka! The Schuyler girl had come into this region to save a kidnapped child. Why not kidnap the girl as well as her ransom; take her away in the taxi and call for more ransom?

Danger abounded in the enterprise, but hard times compel hard tasks, and with these reform administrations and unceasing shake-ups in the departments it was increasingly difficult to earn a dishonest living peacefully without interruption.

To natures like that of Achilles, Pepsin, and Shang two things can gild even refined gold—danger in getting it and folly in spending it.

Achilles with a nod drew all the heads close over the table. He outlined his scheme and an awe fell upon the little conference. It would be too risky to keep Muriel down-town till the ransom was paid. A hiding-place in the suburbs was necessary. The Italians were masters of kidnapping technic. He knew a former employee of a Greek-Italian olive-oil importing company who owned a snug little hut in the farthest Bronx borough. He knew also a venturesome taxicab-driver known as "Little Big Blip" who would manage the transportation.

Shang had one captious comment on Achilles's stratagem.

"It looks easy, Kill, once we gotter; but how we gona gitter?"

Achilles said: "Dat's easy. You on'y have to invite her to your place and hold her till midnight."

Ida let out a snicker of ridicule. The men snapped

glances of impatient rebuke at her and turned back to Shang, who spoke with becoming modesty: "T'anks for de comp'ment, Kill. But if I was to ast a dame like dat to folly me home I ain't sure she'd go. What do you t'ink, babe?"

Ida whooped with joy. "Follow you home, honey? Why, at your foist woid she'd yip out a holler could be hoid a mile. What do yous cheap skates think that goil is, anyway—a shoitwaist hand? She's a lady, she is, and she don't hardly speak to nothin' less 'n a dook or a noil, unless 'n he's a waiter or a butler. None of yous guys looks like nothin' but what you are."

Pep would have handed her the back of his hand if her husband had not been present and alive to his privilege. Achilles turned to her and said, graciously:

"Den, little lady, it looks like it was up to you."

"Up to me?" said Ida. "What's up to me?"

"To get dis Schuyler dame to Allen Street."

Insolent as a cat to a king, Ida leered at him and waved him aside with a slight push of the hand as if he were a glass of milk, adding the classic repartee:

"Don't make me laugh; me lip's chapped."

Achilles scowled black, gathered his big hand into a fist like a mallet, and turned pale, but the spasm passed and he nodded to Shang.

"Convince her, Shang."

Shang rounded on Ida. "Say, say, say! You do what Kill tells you to do."

"Since when do I take orders from him?" said Ida.

"Well, den, take 'em from me."

"I don't take orders from nobody. I ain't a waiter."

Shang was frantic at this public humiliation. "You take orders from me or—or—"

"Or what?" she demanded, her chewing-gum poised in suspense.

Shang rose and pounced on Ida with a groan of rage, seized her slim ropy throat in his cold, lean hands, and

flung her this way and that till her tongue lolled out and her eyes bulged red and white.

At length Achilles put forth his hand and laughed. "She's had plenty, I guess. Leave a little for de coroner, can't you?"

Shang slammed her back into her chair, but she would have slid off into the sawdust if Achilles had not caught her and propped her up like a thing of straw.

Just to breathe again was of vital importance first, and Ida swayed, gasping till the room stopped swirling. She was afraid and horribly ashamed to be disciplined in public with such pain. Pluck came back with life, and she was just reaching out for a stein to smash over his head. Achilles pushed it away, and she was ready to burst into tears, but Shang broke down first and began to cry like a disgusting slobbering booby, pouring out his disappointment at the cruelty of fate that always robbed him of his chance. Nobody wouldn't never do nothing for him, not even his wife.

Ida wavered, irresolute, a minute, then she sighed, put her hand on her master's shoulder, and mumbled: "Nix on the weeps, baby; mother will buy it what it wants."

She collected Shang into her arms and he came speedily out of his grief into that divine smile of his that was always her highest, and usually her only, reward.

He shook from his long lashes the belated tears and told Ida she was his honey-babe for fair, and as soon as they got the Schuyler money collected he would string her with diamonds till she looked like Luna Park at night.

CHAPTER XXXII

WHEN Muriel and Worthing returned to the home of the Angelilli, the elder Angelillo had not come back. They waited a fretful hour for him. Then he came in with his usual load of woe. He seemed to take it from his shoulders like a sack, and he sank down on a chair shaking his head and breathing hard.

His wife and his daughter ran to him, babbling together the golden news of the return of the rich lady with the ransom money for the child.

When Angelillo understood, he must weep awhile over the new joy, and then again over the old grief. He had whittled the demand down from five thousand to twenty-five hundred. He had five hundred of his own to put in. If they had not already destroyed the boy he might reach them in time. To advertise would be too slow. He remembered the egg merchant who had hinted to him once before that he might be of help.

He rose and moved to the door.

Muriel said: "You'd better take the money with you. You might need it in a hurry."

"*Grazie! Grazie!*" he said.

She took from her handbag the five bills and held them out to him. With much apology he lifted two of them from the heap.

"But you said it was twenty-five hundred."

"I have the five. I like better to pay a leetla bit myself for my own leetla boy."

She understood his pride and took back her three bills. He bowed himself out with two of them and she stuffed the others in her handbag.

"For the Lord's sake," Worthing complained, "you oughtn't to carry as much money as that as loosely as that—even if it is Merithew's; even if you can get more by—by dancing."

She stared at him in wonderment as she meekly took the money, folded it up, and pushed it into the bosom of her gown.

The pleasantest explanation was that he was jealous of Merithew. She tested it by making a few allusions to Merry Perry's goodness of heart. He writhed under the test and abruptly got to his feet to say:

"I think I'd better trail along with Mr. Angelillo. He might need help and I might pick up a line on the kidnappers. I'll be back shortly."

"Good-by-y," she murmured, with a kind of taunting sweetness.

She played with the Angelillo babies awhile, chatted with the two mothers, yawned, grew impatient. Suddenly she asked the women:

"You haven't a—*voi non avete uno*—er, *telefono*, have you?"

They had not. Doubtless there was a pay-station near. She would run out and run back at once. Since they had her money now they felt no alarm at her departure.

She wandered for several blocks before she found a small drug-store with a booth so constructed as to magnify all sounds from within and without.

She spent a long time in the telephone-pursuit of Mr. Merithew without getting him. It was in the first days of his honeymoon with Maryla. He was afraid that Aphra Shaler would pursue him, and had told his man to tell any inquiring lady's voice that he had left town for two weeks.

As Muriel left the booth she remembered Maryla, and called up the dressmaking establishment to ask how she was. The telephone-girl at Dutilh's answered with an ironic tang:

"She is no longer with us."

"Really! Then may I speak to Mr. Dutilh?"

Dutilh broke forth into cries: "In Heaven's name where have you been? You made a date for a fitting ten days ago."

"Too bad. I was—I was called out of town. I'll be in later. I just wanted to ask you—"

"And by the way, I just got in a gown that we've named 'Muriel.' It was created in heaven for you. I could have sold it six times, but I hid it."

"Thanks, but—well, I wanted to ask you about Miss Sokalska."

"Miss So-what-ska?"

"Maryla Sokalska. The girl I recommended to you. You gave her a position. How is she getting along?"

"Splendidly, I imagine. She left us between two days, and didn't ask for her back pay, but sent a boy with the cash for a very expensive gown she took a fancy to. She must have come into a lot of money."

Muriel did not catch the cynicism of this. She exclaimed with joy: "Isn't that splendid? She was so poor. I found her in the slums, you know."

"Yes, I know you did. If you find any more slumsters, please leave 'em there."

"Really! I don't understand."

"So much the better."

"I'm sorry if I've caused you any trouble."

"Oh, for the Lord's sake, don't feel that way about it. It's all in the day's work. It gets some of them—" He sighed.

"What gets some of whom?"

"Never you mind. You come up and see 'Muriel' and get your duds fitted."

"I might go see her people and congratulate them—if you really think they have got suddenly rich."

"I wouldn't, if I were you."

"Why?"

"Lord! what a child it is for asking questions! I'm busy. Good-by!"

Muriel was not offended by his mock brusquerie, but she was puzzled by his mysterious allusions. All the way back to the Angelillo home she was trying to figure it out. She lost her way in the streets laid about like jumbled jackstraws, but at length she recognized Batavia Street, and was quickening her pace when she heard her name called.

"Say, Miss Schuyler?"

"Yes?" she said, turning in surprise and staring at the little panting stranger hastening after her.

"Say, listen," said Red Ida; "you're lookin' for the little feller was kidnapped, ain't you?"

"Yes. His father is hunting for him now."

"Well, he won't find him, but I know where he's at."

"You do?"

"Uh-huh!"

"For Heaven's sake tell me!"

"You gotta come with me—this minute."

"Just one moment till I call Mr.—Doctor—"

"If you do you lose um. Say, listen, they're movin' the boy. The kidnappers got scared of that place they kep' him at and they're gona beat it for somewheres else."

"How did you find out?"

"I overhoid a soitain party— Well, say I'll tell you about it on the way. I come flyin' down to tell Mr. Angeliller. I know Nunzio, you know—he's a pa'ticular frien' o' my husban's. But as soon as I seen you I says you're the best party. We ain't got a minute to lose—maybe we'll lose him now if we don't take it on the run."

She took Muriel by the arm and dragged her along.

Muriel began to resist the peremptoriness of this summons.

"But what could we two women do—against the kidnappers?"

"They won't be there if we hustle. Besides, me husban' is waitin'—and he ain't afraid of nothin'."

"Then why doesn't he take the boy himself?"

"Well, say, if you're goin' to argue about it, all right, all right. I thought you'd simpully be shriekin' with joy at the news. I know I done so."

The news was indeed glorious, yet there seemed to be something the matter with it. Muriel thought she ought to be sending up skyrockets, but the powder was damp, somehow.

Still, since they were scouring the town for news of Filippo, it would be a crime to neglect this chance. It would be a delicious thing to bring the boy home in her own arms.

She asked, breathlessly, "Is it far?"

"About a mile."

"A mile! Couldn't we get a taxi?"

"Don't often see one down here. Well, I'll be—er—There's one now. Ain't that luck? If he don't start up just 's we get there."

But he waited. He was apparently asleep, but his engine was humming. In fact, he had refused two or three other foot-sore wanderers lost in the cabless mazes of this part of town. Ida bundled Muriel in and winked with her farther eye at the excited driver as she said:

"Say, listen; shove this old push-cart up to Allen Street fast 's you can. I don't remember the number. I'll pound on the window when you get there."

The cab jumped forward so quickly that Ida was almost left on the curb. She scrambled in, banged the door, and dropped on the seat. The taxi bucked and kicked and swerved and took such chances between trucks and children that Muriel had no curiosity for anything but the next crisis. They plunged through Roosevelt Street to the clamorous New Bowery, into the packed Division Street, and thence to Allen, a very tunnel of a street, covered completely by the Elevated Road and lined with

its thick-set iron posts planted in its narrow sidewalks. This iron grove was closely bordered on one side with high steep stoops crammed with merchants and merchandise, and on the other side with dingy shops.

Through the trestle overhead a little sunlight pushed through in slim shafts, making a sort of prolonged infernal pergola of the street.

The lane was too strait to admit surface-car tracks and it was favored by a slow and ugly truck traffic. Now and then as the taxicab stopped short to escape a collision or waited for some knot to untangle itself to the tune of much profanity and much torment of gigantic horses, Muriel got an impression of picturesque squalor, a flare of great red quilts hung out like banners, a cavernous junk-shop, a public bath-house. She had time to read the legend on the "Congregation Tefereth Israel, Established 5630," and she thought that it must be very old indeed, not knowing that this meant A.D. 1868. There had been no Elevated Road here, and none of the tenements, then.

Muriel's ears were so abused by the thunder of the trains overhead and the pandemonium of the traffic that she forgot to ask Ida any further details.

Suddenly the girl began to rap on the glass. She motioned the driver to stop. She got down and helped Muriel to emerge. Muriel hastened to say:

"You must let me pay the man—or, no, we'd better keep him to take the boy back. Just wait, won't you please?"

The driver flushed at the graciousness of her pleading tone and watched her run across the street between two wagons. It was not a prepossessing place, this street, and Muriel followed the impatient Ida with hesitant gait. She wanted to refuse to go on. She wanted to take a policeman with her. But the impetus of her folly carried her along.

She glanced back anxiously. The taxicab she had told to wait was moving ahead.

"Look—the taxi!" she gasped. "He's not waiting! and I hadn't paid him!"

"He's goin' to the corner to toin round, I guess," said Ida.

"Oh," said Muriel.

"Here's the place," said Ida, and, dropping back, took Muriel's arm and urged her into a hallway, dark, dirty, and ominous. Muriel huddled herself together to keep from touching the grimy walls. The pounding of a train thudding by on the Elevated rivaled the beat of her uneasy heart in her ears.

"Do we go up these awful stairs?" she asked.

"No'm," said Ida, "right on through."

Ahead was a cavelike opening, giving on a foul court, with a view of many tiers of fire-escapes, hundreds of clothes-lines. Set in the court was a small building, an old pauper of a building, a dilapidated, besotted building, apparently deserted.

Muriel hung back and looked at Ida with questioning anxiety. Ida whispered:

"That's the place."

"I don't think we'd better go alone?"

"It's all right, dearie. The Dagoes is away and me husban's waitin' for us."

Shang Ganley, indeed, appeared at the doorway and, lifting his hat, smiled. Muriel was terrified by the smile —his smile and Ida's "dearie." She wanted to turn and run. But she was ashamed to be afraid, and she went on to where Shang awaited her.

"He's here, lady," said Shang.

"Bring him out, then," said Muriel, hanging back.

"I ain't sure it's the right boy," said Shang, with desperate inspiration. "You've saw his pitcher, 'ain't you? Come and take a peek at him. If it's him, I'll bust in de door."

Muriel paused a moment, then she said, "No."

"All right," said Shang. "I t'ought sure I had him.

Maybe it ain't him at all. On'y I hoid him cryin' for his mamma, and me wife hoid a coupla Dagoes sayin' it was him."

By yielding Shang won. Muriel flushed at the abjectness of her cowardice. She was reassured by his failure to insist. She was tormented by the oldest word in the world, "mamma."

"I'll go," she said, and plunged forward. When Shang paused to let her pass, she commanded, "Lead the way, please."

"Sure, lady," he said, and moved in.

The building had been emptied by the Board of Health, and its demolition ordered, but not begun. Shang went ahead, vanishing quickly in the gloom. Muriel followed him, and Ida followed her.

"Mind your step, and don't make no noise," said Ida.

Suddenly Muriel was enveloped in a cloudy embrace. A clammy palm was slipped across her mouth, an arm encircled her, clenched her tight against the body of a man. The odium of this contact was her first horror. She fought with disgust instead of fear. She was strong. She writhed loose. She struck out, and Shang fell like the weakling he was. She whirled and ran back toward the light. But Ida threw herself in the way. Before she could tear herself loose Shang was up and groping for her. Muriel was never one of those women who scream at the first surprise.

The cold hand of Shang came across her shoulder. She tried to scream now, but her mouth was smothered in the crook of an elbow. Her teeth bit fiercely into the sleeve. There was a little yelp, an oath, a cry. "Pep, where are you?" Then another big shadow blotted the light.

CHAPTER XXXIII

PEP CHU had no patience with the theory that women are not men's equals. While Shang held Muriel, Pep attacked her as he would have attacked a man. He cursed her and beat her with his fists. Her hands went out pitifully to shield her, but they were smashed aside. He struck at her heart twice; then there came an earthquake upper-cut under her chin where it gleamed below Shang's sleeve. Muriel sank, relaxed, in Shang's arm with such sudden listlessness that he fell to his knees.

Ida witnessed the sacrilege. It was Ida that screamed. She attacked Pep, kicking, biting, scratching. He borrowed Shang's prerogative and, swinging his arm back, flapped her against the wall. Then he whirled and stood threatening the pit of her stomach with a low short-arm jab. She writhed like a wounded snake before its menace.

"I'll be good," she whispered. "But don't hoit her, don't hoit Muriel. She ain't used to it. She's a swell. For Gawd's sake, Shang, be careful, or it's the Chair for yours for sure."

"Ah, shut up and gimme somethin' to gag her wit'."

She was about to obey him, but she shook herself and groaned:

"No, no; I'm through."

"You do what I tell you."

"No!"

"Soak her one for me, Pep."

She faced the sledge of his fist in a lockjaw of fright and courage:

"You can croak me, but I'm through with this job."

Shang roared, "You gona run call a cop, I suppose."

He carried his right hand to the holster under his arm.

"Shang!" she gasped. That he should accuse her of such treachery was worse than a bullet. She began to cry at the very cruelty of the suspicion.

Pep lighted a match and bent to stare at Muriel lying with drooped head across Shang's knee. The men gazed with admiration.

"Some looker, huh?" Shang murmured.

Ida advanced on him with fury: "You be careful, you—you—"

Shang snarled at her: "Ah, git ta hell out o' here. You're no good now."

She turned to go, sobbing, one shoulder sliding along the wall. Shang called after her:

"Just one t'ing, kid. If you got any idea of splittin' on dis job, you know I'll git you, if I go to de Chair twice—you know dat, don't you? I'll come for you if I have to bust out of de straps on de Chair. You know dat, don't you?"

She did not answer.

Pep stopped her. "Promise?"

Shang laughed: "Don't promise me nuttin', kid. Promise yourself sumpin'. Leave her go, Pep, and gimme a help wit' dis beaut. When she comes to she'll holler bloody moider if she ain't gagged."

Pep Chu thought it a foolish thing to let Ida go, and he said:

"If dat frail gets talkin', dey's no tellin what she won't say."

"Ah, don't worry about her," said Shang. "She's bug-house about me."

"Sometimes dem loons gets cured. Anyway, she's loose now," said Pep, as he reluctantly produced a new

handkerchief that he never used, but kept neatly folded in his upper coat pocket.

He made a gag of it, pressed it between Muriel's lips, and tied it behind her head. Then they picked her up, heels and neck, and carried her down into the cellar.

Up to a few years ago there were hundreds of such underground horrors in New York. Some of them were lodging-houses where people slept like swine, with their heads pillowed on each other's feet or knees. The despotic Board of Health and the prying Fire Commissioners cleaned out most of them, but this one had relapsed since its condemnation.

Pep carried a pocket-flashlight that he used when he went calling professionally. It was not easy to transport Muriel's unresisting and unassisting body down the steps, and there were stumbles and lurches that terrified her as she came back to consciousness. But she could neither speak nor scream nor even gasp, because of the gag. They seated her on an old beer-keg set against a stanchion. They carried her hands back of that and tied them. Then they assured her that she would suffer no harm. But there was no comfort in their words or their manner, and every discomfort in her plight.

Pep left now to notify Achilles that the trap was sprung.

Muriel leaned against the stanchion in pain and dismay and blind wonderment. Her descent into this pit was as if she had fallen into an old well under a sidewalk. Suddenly she was there, bruised, helpless, bewildered.

Shang sat and pondered her offensively as she pondered him with disgust and dread. She seemed to be all eyes. He had hardly any. He smoked cigarette after cigarette, sticking the stub of each upright on a box alongside. Once she saw him take a small parcel from his pocket, empty a powder on his wrist, and inhale it. She supposed that he had a bad cold. She did not wonder, if he lived in such a place as this.

Shang mused over her through the screening smoke of a

dozen cigarettes. He tried to speak to her, but could find nothing to say. Suddenly he started; he was remembering Nunzio's report that she had five thousand dollars with her. He looked about. He ran up the steps, searched the hall, and found the handbag she had dropped in the scuffle. There was no money in it except a few small bills and some change. She must have the five thousand somewhere about her.

He returned to his place on the box and tossed the handbag into her lap. He was thinking vigorously. He was thinking of what he could do with five thousand dollars. If he had that he could leave the city, the state, the country; he could know luxury and perfect idleness. If he stayed, he must take part in a perilous scheme and wait indefinitely for a ransom to be paid over, perhaps, to Achilles. He would probably bolt with it all. Who wouldn't? There was nobody he could trust.

Why should he count upon the gang? They were only a bunch of crooks! Honor among thieves was a thing he had heard of but never met with. Why should he wait and brave all the dangers of police pursuit for a doubtful reward when all he had to do was to reach forward and clutch the certain money before him? Five thousand got was better than a hundred thousand to get. He could make an escape to New Jersey and to Canada and across to Europe and give the rest of the "fleet" and all of the bulls the laugh.

He rose and moved forward. Muriel felt that he was about to attack her again. She cowered, but she had no escape and no defense. And yet she had one defense: her integrity, the aureole of innocence, "a hidden strength," said Milton:

> 'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity:
> She that has that is clad in complete steel;
> And, like a quiver'd nymph with arrows keen,
> May trace huge forests and unharbour'd heaths,

Infamous hills and sandy perilous wilds.
Yea, there where very Desolation dwells
By grots and caverns shagg'd with horrid shades
She may pass on with unblench'd majesty.

When Shang Ganley tried but to lay his hand upon Muriel it was such an impious profanation that an invisible fist seemed to thrust him back, though the invisible palms of greed thrust him forward.

He was ashamed of his scruples, but he could not throttle them. He compromised. He said:

"You got a wad o' money on you, lady. It belongs to me. If I untie your hands will you get it for me and promise on your oat' dat you won't put up a fight—or would you radder I soiched for it meself?"

He glared at her, but she could not speak. He dictated an oath, and she nodded assent.

"I'll leave you loose one minute," he said. "If you try to double-cross me I'll put you out wit' a tap o' dis gun."

He gave her a glance at a flat automatic revolver. Then he untied her hands and stood on guard as if she were a crouched leopardess. First she stretched her cramped fingers and her aching arms. She would have eased the maddeningly tormenting gag, but he warned her with a growl. She slipped her fingers into the bosom of her gown, took out the little roll of bills, and offered it to him. He seized it, stuffed it in his pocket, and hastily tied her hands again.

Then he moved to the cellar stairs. He paused to count the money. He found only three thousand dollars. He roared in wrath. Even she was crooked! Everybody was trying to cheat him. He turned again and advanced against her, slapping the bills with the back of his fingers, and growling:

"You can't short-change me. Come across, come across wit' de rest of it or I'll get it meself."

Just then Pep Chu stole back. He found Shang with the money in his hand. Instinct told him what Shang's scheme was. He snatched at the bills. There was a struggle. Muriel prayed that they would disable each other. Pep won the fight easily and pocketed the spoils. He took them out again and counted them. He also shouted that robbery was being done. He searched Shang's pockets and was forced to believe Shang's explanation. Pep was vicious enough to be more than willing to search Muriel, but Shang happened to think:

"Maybe she staked old Angelillo to some of our money?"

Muriel nodded frantically.

"How much?"

She could not answer. He held up two fingers.

"Two t'ousand?"

She nodded zealously. Her explanation was accepted dolefully.

"He beat us to it."

There was a debate between Shang and Pep as to the disposal of the balance in hand. Pep was willing to divide even. But they could not profitably tear the third thousand-dollar bill in two. In this quandary they remembered Achilles, and they feared his wrath. He knew that Muriel had had five thousand dollars with her. He would suspect any explanation. He would not accept their word. It was pitiful how distrustful people were.

They were afraid of the very money. They resolved not to be found with it in their possession. Shang slipped it into Muriel's handbag and put it at her feet. They wanted her to guard it for them!

As the dinner-hour drew near and went past, hunger assailed them. Pep went first and fed, then spelled Shang, who brought back a sandwich and a bottle of ginger-ale for Muriel.

They extracted oaths from Muriel and released her hands and her mouth from the galling restraint. She had been drained of her strength by exhaustion and fear.

and she ate greedily, salting her bread with tears. She was tied up again, and Shang, having produced two candles, lighted them and stuck them on the box. Then they sat down to wait till midnight.

To make conversation, Shang explained to his perfect audience what they were there for. He apologized for the discomforts of the cellar, but promised her greater comfort where they were going. She could return to her own home, indeed, in a day or two if her father proved reasonable.

There was a kind of relief to Muriel in knowing at last why this outrage had been inflicted on her. The worst was not so bad as she had vaguely feared.

Muriel had had time to think of many things. She had regained a little calm. The bitter irony of it all was her chief thought. She felt that she had made herself ridiculous rather than tragic. She was going to perform miracles for the poor, and this was their gratitude to her. She was going to set the world right—and here she was in this loathsome cave, unable even to brush her own hair from her eyes. In all her woes that was perhaps the most maddening, that she could not keep her hair from tickling her forehead and her eyes.

And where was her Dr. Worthing? If she had stayed with him she would have had protection. What was he thinking of her now? Once more—once more!—she had broken an engagement with him. He would not even trouble to look for her this time.

And now she felt a little sorry for herself. To be misjudged by him was too cruel. She gave herself a morsel of the sympathy she had for everybody else; she spared herself a little of her own pity. By and by her fatigue and her helplessness were so great that she slipped by degrees into the gulf of sleep.

The two young men sat and studied her according to their lights.

CHAPTER XXXIV

WHEN Dr. Worthing left Muriel he was sick with jealousy of Perry Merithew. He followed Angelillo to the shop of the egg merchant.

Angelillo showed him the twenty-five hundred dollars, and he said he would see if he could find somebody who might find somebody who knew somebody.

He left his shop and forbade them to follow him. He probably telephoned, for shortly he returned and told Angelillo a long story, which Angelillo explained to Worthing:

"He tella me to go standa where Catterina meet Henry. Bineby come somebody who say, 'Goot evaning; time is mawney.' I geeve him package wit' alla de mawney, and somebody goes, and bineby, somewhere, my leetla Filippo he is turn loose and comes queeck home."

Then he ran to the corner of Catherine and Henry streets. He motioned to Worthing to keep his distance. He took his stand at the corner and waited, waited, waited.

People of all sorts and conditions passed. A policeman loitered about. At last he strolled away.

A little girl drifted along the street. Angelillo wasted only a glance on her. She wandered close to him and piped:

"*Buona sera, signore; il tempo è denaro.*"

Angelillo started, gasped, slipped the money into her hand, kissed her hair, and cried:

"*Presto possibile. Presto! presto!*"

The little girl ran away, clutching the package. As she

shot across Catherine Street a brewery-truck almost caught her. Angelillo staggered against the wall. He watched her vanish, stood staring after her, his huge bulk aquiver with terror.

Worthing took him by the arm and led him home. He was eager to tell Muriel. She was not there. He had to wait awhile. Angelillo poured forth the story of what had happened, to the shricking Gemma and her mother and to Nunzio. Nunzio was as happy as the rest; he wept, and caressed his wife, and embraced Worthing, as they all did. Nunzio had no dream of the consequences of his gossip.

Worthing was sorry for Muriel's absence from this carnival that she had financed.

It was a long while before he could command enough attention to ask what had become of her. Then he was told that she had gone to telephone, promising to return at once.

Worthing hurried out and ransacked the neighborhood before he found a druggist who said that such a lady had made use of his telephone and gone. She turned back toward Batavia Street. The druggist knew that, because he had gone to the door and watched her. She was worth watching, he said.

Worthing telephoned to Muriel's home. The servants had not even heard of her return to New York.

Worthing went back to the Angelilli. She had not returned.

He smoked. Finally he made a journey to the Sokalski home. He went up Allen Street in a taxicab. He went past the very door that Muriel had entered. He glanced in casually. It was an excellent chance for telepathy, as both were thinking of both. But no telepam reached either from other.

The Sokalskis had not seen or heard of Muriel. They were mysteriously uncommunicative about Maryla. Worthing talked with the self-wounded Balinsky. He

was improving rapidly, but he was growing uneasy concerning the fate of his wife and child.

Worthing made him many promises and left. He tried to throw off his oppression. He tried to substitute jealousy for it. He suspected that she had telephoned Merithew, and had gone to dinner with him. They were dancing between courses, no doubt. They would dance all evening. She would tell Merithew how wonderful he was with his munificent charity.

The suspicion was bitter, but it did not satisfy him. A tenderness for the girl kept sweetening his thoughts. He ate his own dinner at an Hungarian restaurant where imitation Bohemians drove him frantic with their mock revels.

He went back to the Angelillo home. It was noisy with festival spirit and gabbling neighbors. The reluctant little prodigal had come home. He was hysterical with his safety and his importance. He kept telling his story. His keeper had taken him out for a walk, and had said, "Wait here a few minutes till I come back." Filippo had not waited; he had started to run. He had run till he ran into a policeman's leg. He held on to it as if it were a lamp-post. He tried to climb it. He demanded his "babbo! mamma! Angelillo!" The name Angelillo was introduction enough. He came home in triumph on the policeman's shoulder. Papa Angelillo kissed the policeman and nearly got himself arrested.

Worthing rejoiced with that rebuilded home, that reconstructed family. He saw that the child was feverish, and forbade him any more excitement. Filippo was put to bed in his own bed, with his mother tucking him in and bedewing his face with the holy water of her tears.

There was but one regret—Muriel's absence. She should have been there! Worthing questioned the family again. He had never told them Muriel's name, but had they spoken of her to any one? They told whom they had told.

He asked Nunzio if he had told anybody. Nunzio said that he had told nobody. He paused, started, shook his head, repeated, "Nobody."

Worthing caught that little pause. He called Nunzio to the outer hall, seized him roughly, and demanded what he was concealing. Nunzio denied that he had anything to conceal. He had merely remembered his conversation with his friends, Signore and Signora Ganley, at the stusso-house.

This was the only thing left to Worthing to try. He made Nunzio lead him to the place. It was a long walk, and he cross-examined the young fellow ruthlessly. The Ganleys did not live in the building where Muriel was a prisoner. When Worthing and Nunzio reached the Ganley flat there was no one at home. The neighbors said that nobody had been at home all evening. Late in the afternoon Mrs. Ganley had come in and dressed and gone to her work up-town somewhere. Mr. Ganley had not been seen. Stuss-players had called and been turned away by the locked door.

Worthing gave up and let the drowsy Nunzio go back to his home. He began to pace the East Side aimlessly, goaded by anxieties, lured from place to place by whims of fantastic theory.

When he grew too dog-tired to walk, he would drop in at a saloon or a moving-picture show. But he could not rest. One moment he thought that he ought to take the police into his confidence; the next he derided himself for a fool. He had no right to give her name to the police. She was dining with friends on one of the roof gardens, perhaps, or had gone to one of the theaters.

Yet what if harm should befall her? He laughed again. What harm could befall a wide-awake girl in the Twentieth Century in New York City? And yet—harm did befall people. Numbers of people disappeared every month. Numbers of daring crimes remained mysteries for ever.

He resolved to have one last try at that stuss-house.

Perhaps it would open late at night. Ganley might at least help with a hint. Worthing plodded achingly back to Allen Street. It was almost abandoned. A rough and dusty wind had driven the populace indoors to bed.

He went to Shang Ganley's flat. The hall was dark save for a little gas-jet that seemed to be put there to show how dark it was. Worthing knocked and knocked, and had no answer.

He went back to the street. He was worn out, and fatigue was giving bromides to anxiety. He would have to go home to bed. He saw a taxicab standing a few doors below. It was an odd sight at this hour in this street—as welcome as it was odd. He resolved to make his feet a gift of a ride home.

There were two men on the box of the taxicab. That was suspicious. They were talking in low tones against the hum of the engine. He would make one of them get down. It was not wise to ride in a taxicab with two men on the box. He walked to the cab and opened the door. Before he could name his destination the driver said:

"Nuttin' doin', boss. I'm engaged."

Worthing moved on with a sigh. Then it struck him as odd that a taxicab should be waiting in front of this peculiarly squalid tenement. A thousand simple reasons might explain it. Yet it struck him as odd. A thousand odd reasons might explain it, too. He paused—a hundred yards away—and looked back. He leaned on a pillar of the Elevated Road and looked back. He was too tired to move on.

He stood there a long while till a taxicab that had taken some late newspaper man to his office came hustling along. Worthing stepped out and stopped it with a signal. He was about to get in. But he was still fretting over the mystery of that other taxicab. He closed the door softly and said, "Wait."

He advanced on the other taxicab, keeping in the lee of the Elevated pillars.

A man issued from the door of the tenement and hissed. The extra man on the box got off and looked up and down the street anxiously, then opened the door. Worthing felt that now the riddle was to be answered. He moved close quickly.

Two men came out, supporting a woman between them. She seemed to be resisting. They pressed her forward. She struggled. Worthing hurried up.

"What's the matter with the girl?"

The answer was in Pep Chu's ugliest tones. "Ah, she's been drinkin' a little too much."

Worthing had seen an enormous number of such cases. This was unconvincing. "I'm a doctor. Maybe I can help you."

"You wait till you're sent for."

The girl struggled and made a choking sound. She shook off the veil, and Worthing caught a glimpse of eyes. The lower part of the face was hidden with a white cloth. But those eyes seemed to cry to him. He was sure that there were no other eyes on earth like those.

Worthing seized Shang Ganley by the arm.

Pep made an unexpected lunge at him, and struck him in the face. He reeled against a pillar and clutched it to keep from falling. Before the street ceased to wheel under him, the girl was thrust into the cab and two men squeezed in with her. The taxicab was moving off.

Worthing leaped on the running-board and caught hold of the door, the window being down. He was struck at, and he fought back with his right hand, clinging with his left hand. Suddenly the knuckles were smashed with the butt end of a revolver. He let go, but caught the long hinge at the side of the cab.

Pep leaned far out and struck at him again with the revolver. He missed and the weapon fell from his hand. The extra man on the box looked back and, seeing Worthing, turned to the driver and yelled:

"Scrape him off!"

The taxi swerved and ran close to the curb, where the Elevated pillars were aligned. The first one they passed struck Worthing a staggering blow. The second one swept him from the side of the car and flung him to the street. He called wildly to the other taxi to come up. While he waited he ran back for the revolver Pep had dropped. It was in good shape and loaded.

His taxicab came up, and he leapt aboard by the driver, pointed to the disappearing taxi, and cried:

"Get 'em!"

He explained why, as the driver tried to whip his old engine to its best endeavor.

Worthing fired his revolver, and his cry of "Police!" reverberated along the cañon of Allen Street with terrifying effect. It was to be another of those motor pursuits that have added a new shiver to the midnights of New York.

CHAPTER XXXV

A STREET could hardly be a street and be darker than Allen Street. That thoroughfare never has even the nightly advantage of the moon and stars. It is hardly more than a long shed, since the Elevated Road roofs it over and runs nearly flush with the opposite windows. The street-lamps are lost or masked among its pillars. The shops are sparsely illuminated at best, and window-cleaning is the industry least practised.

It was an ugly night, besides—a raw March night fallen into the late summer by mistake. The wind was mean, and flung dirt in the eyes, drove loiterers withindoors, and spent its peevishness in kicking up the endless litter left by the push-carts that had filled the street all day.

Even the fruit-stands and saloons that flare at this hour on so many other corners were missing here. Almost the only place alive was a little hole in the wall where a Roumanian sold soft drinks to Roumanians.

By the time its drowsy gossips had rushed into the street at the sound of Dr. Worthing's pistol-shot and his shout, even his taxicab had rushed past. The clamor did not reach the ear of the gangsters who were carrying off Muriel Schuyler in Little Big Blip's taxicab, since an Elevated train roared along the trestle over their heads at that moment, leaving them ignorant that they were pursued.

The driver of the taxicab that Worthing had commandeered—John Sbarra was his name—was astounded at the passenger who stopped him in the street, told him with mystery to wait, and then fired a shot, yelled, ran and leaped on the box with him, crying:

"Get 'em! Get that taxi—ahead there! There's a girl in it—kidnapped! For God's sake, full speed!"

This was more inspiring, and the engine answered the lever with rasping growls and plunges. But it took up its gait so slowly that Sbarra apologized:

"This ain't no racing-machine, you know, boss; but I'll do me damnedest." He jockeyed the car as if it were a horse, with fervent speech: "Come on, come on, you ——! Are you a taxicab or are you a coffee-grinder? If you ever went, go now!"

The two men bent forward and worked their feet as if they were driving treadles. They breathed fast with eagerness, like runners. The hackney engine groaned and spat and protested. By the time it had gathered headway at last the other cab was three hundred yards away.

At East Houston Street Allen Street becomes First Avenue and doubles its width, but the Elevated tracks still cloud the roadway. Worthing did not know that there was a police station at Fourth Street till he passed the green lamp-posts. Then it was too late to call for help from there. Besides he felt that he was gaining.

But at Fifth Street a sleepy peddler loafing along with his unsold wares shoved his push-cart directly across the path. At the sound of Sbarra's horn he underwent paralysis and lockjaw and stood fast. Sbarra switched his car so sharply to the right that he skidded against an Elevated pillar. But he got by with only a mud-guard bent.

Then Worthing saw that the other cab had turned also to the right and was scooting down St. Mark's Place. He made Sbarra continue parallel.

At Avenue A, as he suspected, the other cab turned north again, and he followed suit.

Worthing did not fire his revolver nor shout. He might need his cartridges for closer work, and his shouts would only quicken the speed of his quarry, without bringing help where help was none. He settled down to a si-

lent stern-chase, his eyes and his teeth set, every nerve excruciatingly tense. He was almost intolerably impatient—the more impatient because the progress was smooth and silent and uneventful.

There was no Elevated Road to deny them light now. The avenue was wide and the buildings low. And they had got back the sky—a vast, unusual sky, filled with herds of wind-sped clouds that gave the small high moon the aspect of an anxious fugitive.

On either side of this street was a line of electric globes with the crimson chimneys of fire-alarm street-lamps at intervals. But it was lighted up for nobody except a few slumbering merchants of fruit, who stared at the two cabs hurrying past their corners and returned to their dreams.

It was a dumb and lonesome street, and the doubly belated horse-car rolling down the squealing tracks with a jingle of bells and clop-clop of hoofs seemed but a ghostly equipage from the past.

Sbarra's cab kept shortening the flying interval to the outlaw cab, and Worthing kept straining his eyes in the hope of making out the numbers jiggling on the plate under the little red tail-lamp. But he could not quite be sure of them or their order. He was always just about to read them aright, and his heart was beginning to exult a little, when he saw an electric cross-town car rush across Fourteenth Street directly in the path of the cab rushing forward with Muriel. Worthing's heart sickened and he shut his eyes against the inevitable collision.

Muriel had shut her eyes, too. Her field of vision was only the slivers of view that came through the edges of the blown curtains which were drawn, though the glass in front was down. But she saw the gleaming headlight and the gleaming length of the street-car sweep suddenly across the dark.

She heard the groan of Shang Ganley: "Gawd, we're gone!" and the sharp voice of the man on the box howling

to the chauffeur: "Stop! Toin to de left! Watch out!"

The chauffeur and the motorman made no sounds. They gave their souls to their brakes. The cab struck, rocked, stopped.

The drivers, relieved of the fear of death and murder, spent their exhaust in mutual oaths and hard names and the inane demands: "Agh, watcha think you're doin'?" "Agh, whyn't you look where you're goin'?"

The curtains in the front of the taxicab kept the motorman and the passengers from catching a glimpse of Muriel. She made a frantic effort to break loose, but Shang and Pep twisted her arms up without mercy, and the gag choked back her screams.

She wept mutely at the vanity of so much help so near; and when the motorman backed his big car to let the taxicab pass, there was not even a policeman to investigate the accident.

Then she heard a shot fired somewhere back. She heard a voice that she knew, crying: "Stop that cab! Stop that cab!"

Her heart rejoiced and felt already free. But nobody stopped the cab. She saw Pep lean out of the window and gaze back.

"Who is it? A cop?" said Shang.

"No, it's de guy we scraped off in Allen Street. He's got anudder taxi."

She heard Achilles on the front seat: "Beat it, Blip! Dey're after us!"

She was flung roughly about as the cab shot forward. The voice of Worthing died out in a hubbub of voices. And she wept again, less at the defeat of hope, than at the thought that he was trying to save her.

With the imbecility of startled humanity, when the motorman, the conductor, and the passengers on the street-car heard Worthing's call to "Stop that cab!" they

turned their eyes from that cab to his, and swarmed in his path with lubbering wonder to ask questions.

He knew the oxlike habit of the street crowd, and he wasted no time on explanations. He leaned out and brandished his pistol, shouting:

"Get out of the way, you damned fools!"

They blundered aside and gaped at him as if he were the criminal. He sank back in his seat, muttering disgusted oaths at the delay.

But one crumb of luck had fallen to him. He had won close enough to read the number of the taxicab—646416 N. Y. 1913. He took out his prescription pad and jotted the numerals down lest they be jolted from his memory.

The fugitive was flying faster now and drawing away. The street was lonely again, a sordid abandoned road of closed shops, locked factories, sleeping tenements. There was little need of police here. Not even a cat lurked among the penurious garbage-cans.

They resumed their business of rolling up space as on a spool, and there was a lilt of hope in the steady purr of Sbarra's engine.

And then a little family straggling home appeared, cautiously watched Achilles' cab go by, and started across at its ease; the young father pushing a baby-carriage with one hand, clutching up an infant with the other; his bedraggled wife carrying bundles and directing two pedestrian children.

At the sound of Sbarra's horn and Worthing's voice the family dispersed in all directions, the children darting here and there, and the mother here and there after this one and that.

Worthing's heart sickened again as he felt in imagination the thud of impact and the horror of passing across a child's body. But Sbarra by a miracle of good fortune and good dodging prevented any of the family from devoting their frames to his wheels. He could not refrain from shouting back the utterly unimportant but unfailing rebuke:

"Whyn't you look where you're goin'?"

The father and mother and the children shouted something back that was lost on the wind. Worthing rejoiced at the escape, but the loss of impetus dejected him. His eyes fairly pleaded with the solitude for help, and he groaned:

"Are all the policemen dead? Where in God's world are all the police?"

Sbarra, who was not original, laughed bitterly: "You never find 'em, when you want 'em."

Then as if in mystic answer to the prayer a shadowy figure under a visored cap was suddenly visible in the middle of the street ahead, a very allegory of the police idly tossing his night-stick out of his hand and jerking it back by the cord. He stared at Shang Ganley's swift taxicab and called to it a lazy, "Hay!" But his answer was a curt, "Watch out!" He jumped from its path, but he took revenge on Worthing, confronted him with uplifted palm and would not budge for his life.

Sbarra had to brake down and turn aside. The patrolman laid hold of the car and demanded:

"Hay, where you goin' so fast, young feller?"

Worthing, whose hospital experience had taught him things, called to him: "Hop on here a minute, officer. I need you."

The officer was truculent and suspicious, but he swung aboard and stood up as the car went on. Worthing talked rapidly, as he forced the memorandum into the officer's hand.

"I'm Dr. Worthing, ambulance surgeon at Bellevue. One of my patients is being carried off by a gang of gunmen. She's in that taxi. It's Muriel Schuyler—the daughter of Jacob Schuyler. This is the number of the taxi." He gave him the prescription. "You take it and run to the signal-box and make headquarters send out a general alarm before that taxi can get to one of the bridges. Hurry; it's a matter of life and death!"

The officer pondered with maddening deliberation as he stared up the avenue. "Is that so? Well, I guess I'll just go along with yous."

"Not on your life!" Worthing stormed. "Do as I tell you. They're making for Queensborough Bridge. They'll get away."

"I guess I'll have a shot at their tires."

He drew his revolver with majesty. But Worthing knocked it up.

"Do you want to kill the girl? Do as I tell you, or I'll get you broke."

He was mad enough to thrust even the policeman from the running-board. The officer was furious at the indignity, but the taxicab had jumped ahead. He was for taking a shot at its tires, but in a muddle of indecision he obeyed Worthing's suggestion and dashed for the signal-box, whanging his resounding locust on the pavement as he ran.

That familiar alarm caught the ear of Achilles on the box of the fleeing taxicab. He leaned out and stared back, and Muriel heard, without understanding much:

"Cheese! dat cop's makin' for a signal-box! Dey'll send out a general and have all de bulls in de woil' spillin' out on de streets. Dis ain't gona be no pipe for us guys. Keep your engine in hand, Blip, for quick toins. What we can't dodge we gotta run over."

The patrolman, following Worthing's instructions, reached the signal-box, unlocked it, threw open the door, lifted the telephone receiver from the hook, and pantingly informed the sergeant on the desk at the station-house of the Twenty-first Precinct:

"Say—say, sergeant, this is O'—O'Dono-hoo—noomber sivinty-t'irty-tree. Say, they's a taxicab's gotta be stopped! Got a gerl aboard! Kidnappin' it is! Miss Schuyler—Muriel Schuyler—rich—you know—Jacob Schuyler— Yes, his gerl—a gang's got her! I hollered

'em for to stop—they gave me the laugh—tried for to roon me down. The noomber of the cair is—take it down—646416. Got it? No!" He repeated it several times. "That's it. Sind out the gineral alairm. It's headin' narth on Avenyeh Ah, and goin' like hell—makin' for Queensbury Bridge, maybe—a dirty brown taxi it is—noomber 646416. Ahl right!"

Sergeant Jaskol on the desk called to Sergeant Tahl in reserve to get out on the job, though it was doubtless too late. Meanwhile he was leaning against the telephone and muttering:

"Gimme headquarters."

Headquarters took the news with the unruffled calm of people whose all-day, all-night traffic was in danger and crime. There was no emotion, but much efficiency, in the officer's command to the switchboard operators:

"General alarm: Stop dirty-brown taxicab No. 646416. Muriel Schuyler is on board—kidnapped by gunmen. Making north from Avenyeh A. Notify bridges and upper precincts first. On the job now!"

The operators began to jab plugs into various dimples on the big switchboard, and to murmur the same words into the mouthpieces. Then the plugs were yanked out, and lifted to other spots.

The brain of the police was sending its news and its will to the ganglia. From there is would be flashed out to the muscles.

In each precinct a man in a cap took up the receiver, murmured "Hello," listened, then called, "Sergeant!" A sergeant jumped forward and saluted.

There was a stir among the policemen, prisoners at the desk, and reporters. An officer, or several officers, rushed out and down the steps into the street with the simple task of checking a ton of taxicab going at thirty miles or more an hour, with a gunman at the wheel.

Over two thousand policemen were out on post already in Manhattan Borough. In each precinct the word was

given to notify them as they rang in from their signal-boxes.

But the flashlight signal that sets an eye to blinking over the signal-box and calls the patrolman on the run was not then installed. Some of the patrolmen had just reported and would not ring up again for an hour. These might calmly watch the taxicab go by and never heed it among the droves of taxicabs, all of them hurrying on mysterious errands.

But Manhattan is still an island, and at each of the four huge East River bridges, and at the dozen little bridges across the Harlem River and the Ship Canal, and at each of the ferry-houses on the East River, the Hudson, and the Battery, the word was instantly present and the arrival of taxicab No. 646416 was eagerly awaited by dozens of uniformed Horatii.

Worthing knew this mechanism, and he hoped that it would be invoked to his aid. But he had no assurance that Shang Ganley's destination was out of town. There were hiding-places enough in the twenty-one square miles of Manhattan Borough. There were dangers enough in its hundreds of miles of streets.

A fugitive automobile had all the advantage of a fox in a thick covert. It surprised every street. No one could know whither it was bound, which corner it would turn next, or which after that. Each street was a separate ravine shut off from sight or sound of its parallel. Countless taxicabs were scuttering about the checker-board on more or less honorable errands. They were all overspeeding at this hour, and little heed was paid to them. A car was past before its number was read. If it was commanded to stop, what if it would not stop?

Nearly every night some motor ran amuck with a drunken roadster or a criminal at the wheel. Again and again the outlaws eluded all the cordons and were lost in the complex of the city. If they were overlooked at one of the bridges or dashed past the officer, they had

Greater New York's five thousand miles of streets for their wilderness, and beyond that no limit to their liberty.

Worthing had guessed that Muriel had been carried off for purposes of ransom. His mind had been full of the Angelillo kidnapping case, and this was his first and only theory.

The Queensborough Bridge at Fifty-ninth Street was the first on the route that the taxicab was following. Across its mile-and-a-half span lay all of Long Island.

The directness of the taxicab encouraged the belief that it was making for that bridge. It kept straight on till Avenue A ended bluntly in a brick wall at Twenty-fourth Street. Then it whisked west and disappeared.

When Sbarra's car whisked west in turn the red tail-light of the other taxi was not to be seen in the dark lane where the Metropolitan tower hoisted its bulky shaft seven hundred feet into the sky and held aloft its huge torch among the stars. Above the adjoining roofs its vast clock dial leered like a Cyclops' one stupid eye.

But it saw only one taxicab in that street. Accordingly, when Sbarra reached First Avenue, he swerved to the right without question, and made out the other cab scudding north again.

The Elevated tracks had left First Avenue a block below, and the street ran on unvexed for five miles to the Harlem River. It was a broad, doleful thoroughfare with a low sky-line of ancient tenements save where enormous breweries or warehouses for dressed beef blotted the stars, or gas-towers sat about like stupendous cheese-boxes.

From Twenty-sixth to Twenty-eighth they were passing the Morgue and Bellevue Hospital, whence an ambulance was issuing just in time to compel another wide excursion.

Worthing realized that he should have been going out with that ambulance. It was his watch, and he had sent no word of his absence.

For all his excitement, he had time for a whimsical

wonder if the interne on the tailboard of that ambulance might be going to some such romance as he had run into himself when he went out to mend Happy Hanigan two weeks ago and found Muriel Schuyler.

From the first she had caused him hardly anything except ridiculous hopes, quick and frequent humiliations, long anxieties, suspicions, resentments, derelictions from duty, losses of time and patience and progress.

Now he was risking his bones, his liberty, his position, his very life because of her insane recklessness. Beside his fierce eagerness to rescue her from the scoundrels who held her, he had two other ambitions—to tell her how well she deserved just what had befallen her, and to tell her that she had neither wisdom nor reliability to make her worth ever seeing again. He tried to tell himself that he hated her.

And yet in the quaint algebra of the human equation, when all these plus and minus disappointments, disapprovals, dislikes, disdains, and distrusts were added up, the total was not disregard at all, but love to distraction.

He dared not think how beautiful and dear and more-than-all-telling precious to him was the helpless passenger in the ugly car that sped in front of him, maddeningly unattainable. He dared not remember that it was her good big heart that had brought her into this trap. He thought of the beasts that had charge of her, and took energy from his wrath at them.

The avenue ran now through a space of disreputable lots and rickety fences covered with frivolous posters. Then it dipped under the tracks of the Elevated spur to the Thirty-fourth Street ferry.

Here there was apt to be life, and Worthing broke the quietude with a pistol-shot and a loud yell for "Police!"

The general alarm had already reached the ferry, and the patrolman there had gone running up to the crossing, and a roundsman had joined him. Worthing blessed their

very uniforms as he saw them far ahead, standing under the Elevated tracks with their hands up.

But Achilles was desperate now, and so was Little Big Blip, his creature. Achilles yelled to the officers. Blip made to pass between them, but they closed in front of him.

Blip did not set his brake. He drove straight on like a torpedo. The officers had to jump aside. One of them struck at Achilles with his club; he ducked the blow; it smote the cab and sent the locust whirring to the pavement.

The other officer sprang away too late, and was knocked down. As he sprawled with a wrenched ankle and a broken wrist, he struggled for his revolver and, whirling in the dirt, lifted himself to one elbow and sent a bullet after the taxicab. It was a left-handed shot, and smashed a shop-window a block away.

In the shadow of the tracks he was not seen by Sbarra till the candle-flame at the muzzle of his revolver revealed him. Sbarra twirled his wheel like mad and jammed down his emergency brake just in time to escape killing him. And in avoiding him he missed killing the other officer by a lesser margin.

This man, with his club gone, shoved his revolver in Worthing's face as he clutched at the seat rail and floundered onto the running-board. He held an ancient grudge against all taxi-men, and he was trembling with lust to revenge his fallen comrade.

Worthing threw up his hands, crying: "Don't shoot! Climb on and help us. That's the cab we've got to get! Go on, Sbarra!"

"Nagh you don't!" Roundsman Grebe snarled, and thrust his gun into Sbarra's ear. But Worthing convinced him, as he had convinced the other policeman. and he turned his attention to the car of Achilles.

Grebe took aim and fired. It was a poor shot, and came near puncturing a gaping bystander on the curb. Worthing seized the man's arm as he took closer aim.

"Leave go me arm!" snarled Grebe. "I'm pluggin' at their tires."

"But there's a girl in there," Worthing pleaded. "For God's sake, don't kill her."

Grebe drew down his gun reluctantly and fastened his eyes on the car. He kept breathing oaths and questions, while the taxicab fought space and time, and the lamp-posts drifted by with odiously deliberate indifference. On the left the little playground of St. Gabriel's Park. On the right a brewery with funnels like a war-ship. Gas-turrets emitting an acrid stench. Pork-packers' warehouses. And always the lamp-posts drifting by, with their labels E. 38 St., E. 39 St., E. 40 St., E. 41 St., E. 42 St., E. 43 St.

Grebe was fuming with the helpless sullenness of a fare who is going to miss his train, but rides on.

At Forty-ninth Street the avenue rises over a low ridge and Sbarra's taxicab groaned and slackened. Grebe cursed it with official fluency as if it were purposely shirking. He rounded on the meek Sbarra:

"Why the hell don't you get a velocipede? This damned turtle can't crawl."

Poor Sbarra had berated the engine himself, but he could not permit outside abuse. "If you see a faster car along here, whyn't you grab it?" he said.

"None of your lip," was the best Grebe could answer.

Sbarra's retort was too pat. To the west there were a thousand motor-cars. This long, long lane was devoid of every vehicle, though during the day it was boiling with traffic.

Its silence was gone, however, for the noise of the shots had brought forth what populace there was. Windows were slapped up everywhere, heads were out, people were running from side streets, saloon doors were flipping open and flopping shut.

But these were only spectators, not helpers. To them

the chase was only the old short, short story of the automobile: "Here it comes; there it goes!"

They heard the swish of tires, the chutter of the motor. They saw headlights, then a streak like a great cockroach scurrying, then a red tail-light and a diminuendo. Then another swish and chutter, another cockroach, a tail-light, and silence, and nothing to do but ask one another: "What was that? What's the matter?"

Sbarra and his passengers fairly lifted their taxicab over the slope to the down-grade. When they reached the top the other cab was gone from view. The avenue was empty for nearly a mile ahead. Then there was a rainbow of planets and a rainbow of stone across the street.

"The Queensborough Bridge," said Grebe, "that's what they're makin' for."

Sbarra started to turn left at Fifty-first Street, but Grebe saw with envy the down slope.

"Coast down that!" he commanded. "We'll turn left at the bottom of it."

"But we'll lose sight of them," Worthing protested. "Turn left!"

"Do as I tell you," Grebe thundered. "They'll not get past the bridge entrance. The general alarm must have reached there long ago."

This same thought had come to Achilles as his car turned north on Second Avenue under the noisy Elevated. He glanced back and shrieked:

"We've shook 'em, t'ank Gawd! Dey'll be follerin' along, dough. Now toin back to Foist Avenyeh and we'll get a clean break."

Blip whirled east again at Fifty-third Street, and asked: "Do we toin nort' or sout' next?"

"Nort', o' course, you mutt. Do you t'ink we want to run over dat copper twicet?"

The combination of Grebe's indifference with Achilles' ingenuity resulted in a meeting of the two taxicabs at

Fifty-third Street and First Avenue, to the tremendous amazement of both parties.

They stared at one another vacantly. Worthing's first thought was expressed in a loud cry of good cheer: "Muriel! don't be afraid!"

Grebe thrust out his revolver and yelled, "Halt!"

Worthing reached in his pocket for his pistol to join battle. Blip wasted little time in wonder. He whirled to the left, throwing his whole cab forward for a shield. As it slewed round Achilles leaned out and fired across him. The slug of lead twanged past the policeman's elbow and Worthing's wrist and glanced from the wheel. Sbarra groaned unnoticed:

"Well, they got me, all right."

His right hand slid from the wheel, his left hand caught at his biceps where the sting was. The car wabbled and ran hither and yon, while Grebe fired at the front tire and sent a bullet through the back of the other taxicab.

Worthing had only one thought—Muriel's safety. He was insane enough to stick his pistol under the policeman's chin and yell:

"If you shoot again, I will!"

Grebe did not hear him. He turned to snarl at Sbarra: "Where the hell you drivin'?"

The unguided car was making for a lamp-post when Sbarra forced his hands back to the wheel and held the course true while he shut off the power. He yelped back at Grebe:

"They got me, I tell you. I'm through!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

GREBE'S disgust left no room for sympathy. He groaned at his enforced idleness and writhed with chagrin as he heard Achilles' heroic laughter float back triumphantly.

Worthing was hardened, too, by too much experience with wounds. He turned on the stoic Sbarra with contempt for his cowardice.

"Go on!" he shouted. "Go on! You can't stop here!"

"Me arm's gone," Sbarra shouted back into his face. "I can't run me car, I tell you."

Worthing glared at him a moment, then he said: "Well, I can. Here officer, help me lift this man off."

Grebe lent him a hand, and the loudly protesting Sbarra was evicted from his throne. A knot of people had gathered now, and a policeman, drawn by the sound of riot, came running up, so confused that he was trying to wipe the beer froth from his mustache with his revolver, thinking it was his handkerchief, and threatening the crowd with his handkerchief, thinking it was his revolver.

Worthing gave him a glance and a command as he leaned Sbarra against the lamp-post. "Call an ambulance and give this man first aid."

Then he ran to the taxicab, cranked it up, slid to the wheel, and set off so quickly that the amazed Grebe had hardly time to join him. Sbarra sat up and wailed for his cab and his fare, but both were gone.

"Where did you learn so much?" said Grebe, eyes ahead on the very, very small taxicab. "Do you own a car?"

"No," said Worthing, his eyes on the future. The car

seemed to go faster because he had something to do besides watch and wait.

There were people enough on the street now, and a few vehicles; no motors, however, except a burly brewery-truck that went by like a building on skids.

Achilles' taxicab vanished under the broad vault of the Queensborough Bridge. When Worthing reached the other side of it the taxicab was not to be seen.

Grebe yelled to a tipsy laborer homeward bound: "Hay, have you seen a taxicab go by here just now?"

The fellow with great majesty pointed up Sixtieth Street and tottered on.

"They're makin' for the bridge after all," said Grebe.

The hill ran up as the bridge ran down to their meeting at Second Avenue. The taxicab grunted and smoked at its task, and Grebe was tempted to drop off and run afoot, but he stuck by the car. It had only two passengers now, and Blip's carried five.

As they gained the summit there was no sign of excitement visible. Several police were facing south, waiting for the cab to dare the entrance. Another loitered at Sixtieth Street. Grebe yelled to him:

"Did you see a taxicab pass this way?"

The patrolman pointed down Sixtieth Street.

"What number was it?"

"I didn't notice."

"Oh, you didn't! and why didn't you, you big blind boob?"

The patrolman's rejoinder was not heard if he made one.

"They're makin' for the Fifty-ninth Street entrance of the Park," said Grebe. "If they get in there they're gone for good. They can leave the taxi in the woods and hold up a limousine or something."

Worthing's heart ached with terror for Muriel, and with fatigue as if it had been pumping its own life-blood into the engine.

East Sixtieth Street was a different world again from the others they had traversed, a relic of those old-fashioned brownstone corridors that so many New York streets were, with stoops all alike leaned up like step-ladders against houses all alike.

At Third Avenue they shot past a street-car just in the nick of time to escape being hurled against a pillar of the Elevated and doubly destroyed.

At Lexington Avenue they jounced across the obstructions of the unfinished Subway.

Already the lights and the houses indicated that the regions of poverty and toil were past. The realm of luxurious tenements was here. There was no dearth of motors now. At Park Avenue they were almost cut down by a touring-car that went by with a whurroo.

"I've a mind to take a shot at that," said Grebe.

They rushed across Madison Avenue and advanced with haste toward the dusk labyrinth of Central Park. They came into the nebulous glamour of the Plaza, misty with globes of fire and with the cliffs of light where the big hotels were clustered.

There were many ways here for the quarry to choose, and there were many cars and many taxicabs scuttling up and down Fifth Avenue. The problem here was to find a needle moving through a moving haystack.

Grebe fired three shots into the air to warn the Avenue and bring out the police.

And now Muriel was back in her own parish. She knew it from the frightened and ferocious chatter of the two companions with whom and with whose destinies her arms were locked.

The danger from collisions and from bullets caused her hardly so much distress as the repellant propinquity of Shang Ganley, who was like a toad, heavy, stolid, repulsive; and of Pep Chu, who was like a rat, alert, restless, sleek, abominable. Yet both treated her with as much

respect as they were capable of, because she was a prize in ransom, and the danger of their own capture was so great that they wished to give her no extra grievance. They kept muttering reassurances to her.

"Don't git skeered, lady. You won't git hoited." And, "Soon's we get where we're goin', we'll take off dat gag."

This last had become the most desirable boon imaginable—just to be freed from the chafing, choking, aching, disgusting wad of cloth that filled her mouth and cramped her tongue. The physical annoyance she felt to be unbearable, but she had to bear it. The inability to speak, to protest, to promise that she would make no outcry was maddening. She could not even say, "I surrender." She understood what a curb-bitted horse with a tender mouth and high spirit must undergo, and she vowed to deal more gently with her own horses if she ever got back to them.

If she could only make these beasts understand! If they would only let her speak to them, write them a word, she would make them any promise, give her parole of honor not to scream, not to make a sound. She wanted to say that if any one stopped the cab she would tell the police themselves that she was there of her own free will. If Worthing came to her rescue she would send him away and endure again that discouraged look of his. If she were taken from them by force she would collect the ransom herself and carry it to them or return as a hostage.

All these promises she thought of and longed to exchange for the mere removal of that bridle on her speech, that gag upon her very soul.

And she would have kept whatever promise she gave at whatever cost. But the fools could not imagine her thoughts; they would not have risked the wise gamble of that trust.

And so Muriel made the tempestuous voyage like a culprit in irons on a storm-tossed ship, thrown about in mute

awkwardness whenever the car skidded or careened, whenever it was checked short or thrown forward.

Worthing's cry of "Stop that cab!" had been a wonderful encouragement to her. Then she had begun to be afraid for him. He was venturing his own safety for her sake, and she could not know what he was undergoing. She wanted to call out to him: "Be careful of your bones, my dear. Don't risk too much for only me."

Her heart had astonished her with that phrase, "My dear," as Worthing was later astounded to hear his own voice crying out to her "Muriel!" Their conversation had always been formal, but their souls had run on ahead unnoticed, and their souls kept flinging out messages to each other, messages that could not be transmitted or received since the appliances have not been invented yet.

When Muriel heard the shot that Achilles fired, and the groan of Sbarra, and the jeering laugh of Achilles, she felt sure that Worthing had been wounded, killed, perhaps. She heard nothing more of pursuit. Shang and Pep had been frightened to a palsy by the bullet that ripped through the leather top of the cab, but the gangsters on the front seat exchanged messages of congratulation. They had "croaked" somebody and put the cab "out of business."

Muriel fell back and gave up to despair. She cared nothing for her own fate now since she could not go back to Worthing's aid.

The breeze whipped the curtain aside once, and she caught sight of a sign "E. 60 St.," and again she read "Madison Avenue." A moment later a glimpse was vouchsafed her of the tall lamps and the drawn curtains of the Metropolitan Club.

"Pipe dat block, Shang," said Pep. "Dat's de millionaires' hangout—swell place for a little second-story woik."

Muriel smiled sardonically. Her father was one of the founders, and a member of the house committee of that

club. She had often taken lunch or dinner in the women's wing of it. There were friends enough of her father's and hers in there to rescue her if they only knew. But they were playing billiards or solemnly perusing their royal sequences in the card-room. All their wealth was of less help to her now than a punctured tire would be.

The car slowed down a trifle as Achilles debated with Blip:

"Say, we dassent break for de Park. Dey got a line-up o' bulls over dere. Flash up de Avenyeh. It's dark. Maybe we can break t'rough up higher somewheres. Go slow so's nobody won't suspicion nuttin'."

They moved up the Avenue at a gait suspiciously respectable for a taxicab. Then they heard the shots behind them that Grebe had fired.

Achilles stared back and groaned: "Cheese! it's de same taxi just roundin' Sixtiet' Street. Open her up again, Blip."

Muriel's dull heart went to the high speed with a new zest for life.

A note of grave alarm shook Achilles' voice now as Muriel heard it through the front curtain.

"Holy Cheese! Blip, slow up! I forgot de station-house in de Park—at de old Arsenal. See, dey got a string of coppers clean acrost de road. Don't stop to toin round. Back up and beat it t'rough Sixty-fourt' Street to Madison Avenyeh."

The Thirty-third Precinct was indeed waiting with clubs at the present for taxicab number 646416. The cordon had already held up a number of taxicabs, to the anger of several innocent persons and to the intense confusion of a few who were not supposed to be in town. Their guilt of other misdemeanors increased their indignation at being accused out of their name.

The police were so busy with these altercations that they overlooked the approach and retreat of the very object of their search.

As Worthing's car turned into Fifth Avenue, his fiercely seeking eyes caught sight of a taxicab backing down for a turn. He thought its outline was familiar. It backed into the strong light at the corner, and he made out the long-sought number 646416.

"There they go!" he cried to Grebe. He had the profit of his headway, and he took the corner at high speed soon after Blip turned it at low.

At Madison Avenue Blip was forced north by an up-bound street-car he dared not try to pass. Worthing put after him, cutting in behind the street-car. There was a seesaw of good luck and bad for both hare and hound. Old men, fat women, a U. S. Mail truck, obsolete hansoms, street-car passengers dashing to or from cars, impeded the progress of either or both.

The Thirty-first Precinct station in East Sixty-seventh Street had guardians out and a motor-cycle in readiness. Blip got past them under the lee of a street-car, but Grebe's shout brought the motor-cycle put-put-puttering after.

The cycle policeman caught up with Achilles at Seventy-second Street. As he rode up to command a halt, Achilles put his hand out to the wheel and the car whipped to the left so suddenly that it sent the cycle and motorman toppling and sprawling with immense racket almost under the wheels of Worthing's car. Worthing had to run east on Seventy-second Street to avoid the pyrotechnic ruin. But the adroit Blip managed to graze past the curb and turn west again, leaving Worthing to circle ridiculously in the lurch.

Achilles dared not try to force his way into Central Park by the Seventy-second Street entrance, for he saw brass buttons glowing there in wait for him. He swung into Fifth Avenue again, and Worthing followed his traces.

And now the highway ran between huddled palaces on one side and the forested Park on the other. In the Park

the lamps twinkling through the trees seemed to move in countermarching lines like torch-bearers on parade.

Again Worthing's heart chugged with his engine; again the street-lamps edged by in monotonous numbers: E. 75 St., E. 76 St., E. 77 St.—E. 80 St.—E. 86 St.

At Ninetieth there was another entrance to the Park and no one sentineled its obscurity. Worthing followed Blip's red light into the dense shadow and lost it. But he still held his course northerly along the meandering roads. He pressed along silently, and there was nothing in this part of the hunt to disturb the pensive calm of the midnight grove or the billing and cooing of the few lovers still in close communion on the benches.

The road was drawn in great curves of indolent circumlocution among trees so thick that the lamps seemed to be a kind of luminous fruit among the branches. Down the gorge the cab dropped and ran along the banks of the lake where the lights of One Hundred and Tenth Street trailed their reflections in long and drooping racemes.

And then the road expelled them upon the city streets again, with clifflike buildings and abundant light. And they saw Achilles' taxicab driven westward.

They followed, but at speed rapidly dwindling. Grebe noted the slackening, and roared:

"Come on! Come on, man! What you hangin' back for?"

"God help us, the infernal engine is running out of gas!" Worthing groaned. And the cab wavered slowly to a stop. It was dead.

CHAPTER XXXVII

ABOUT this time Red Ida was "working," as she called it, in her cabaret far up-town.

Now she sang, now she danced, now she sat at table with whoever beckoned; she exchanged persiflage, never quite forgetting that she was there as "an artist and a lady."

To-night her little brain-pan was simmering over with turmoil. She had had a busy day. She had been throttled publicly by her spouse and, worse yet, sworn at. She had seen him violently assail Muriel Schuyler and, worse yet, violently admire her.

Ida was used to fighting with her husband, and she did not enjoy his blows. But a peculiar regret chilled her as she remembered the blows that fell on Muriel. She had a kind of reverence for women of that sphere. They were of a finer essence, and rudeness was profanation.

She had onsets of ague when she realized how guilty a part she had borne. It was she who had decoyed the poor girl to the trap. She had revolted later, but that was too late to acquit her of her accompliceship. She would be arrested if anything went wrong. So many things might have gone wrong.

When Shang Ganley had implied that she was capable of betraying him, and had threatened her with death if she did, he had horrified her more than she had ever been horrified. He had previously called her nearly every other name of abuse, but he had never called her a "snitch" before. She had deserved nearly every other unworthy

name, but never this. Her innocence of the few remaining guilts was all the more precious. She had so little good repute that she prized the remnant doubly.

But terror and the instinct of save-yourself-first were her chief emotions.

She scanned every new-comer in the dread that he might be a policeman. She studied the various people to see if any of them were plain-clothes men. Pep and Shang and Achilles might have killed the girl by now. Her hair grew wet on her forehead. Her heart balked and bucked. Yet she must sing on.

Despite the panic in her soul, she kept her smile at work, and her new song had great success—a syncopated tune with drawling tones alternating with rushes:

Treat——her——like——a——ba——by,
Forshe'son——ly a ba——by.
When you take——her withyou, lad,
Youare ta——kingallwehadIknow——ow.
She'll——beacomfort——to you——like she's al——ways been to me.
Sodobe kind
And keepunhappinessaway,
And whenyoufind
Her goldenhairisturning gray
Con——tin——ue to treat her like a ba——by.

Ida noted that Perry Merithew was there again with the same solemn, tawny beauty. It was Maryla, though Ida did not know her name. To-night Maryla tried to dance. She got through several steps. But she gave up. The insatiable and democratic Perry asked Ida to finish the dance.

If anything could have solaced her humbled little heart, it would have been this astonishing rebound from the dust under Shang Ganley's feet to the arms of Perry Merithew.

She knew that Perry was not good, yet she could tell that he was fine; of that same finer essence with Muriel.

Perhaps he knew Miss Schuyler. He ought to be told of her danger. He might be able to save the girl from—perhaps from death.

The need for telling somebody was overwhelming Ida. She began timidly while they did the fox-trot:

"Say, listen! I got a secret—there's sumpun I want to get off me chest. You're a swell, ain't you?"

Perry laughed awkwardly. "Well, I don't know. That depends. Why?"

"If I was to tell you sumpun about another swell—a swell dame, would you keep my name out of it?"

"Yes," Perry laughed. "You may fire when ready, Gridley."

"Ganley," corrected Ida. "Say, listen—do you know Muriel Schuyler?"

She felt a sudden tension in his arm. He grew haughtier. He felt a revulsion against the very use of that name in this place by this creature! He could dance with Ida himself, but Ida must not even allude to Muriel. She had to repeat her question. He nodded icily. Whereupon she said:

"Say, listen! Siddown and buy me a drink and I'll tell you all about it."

She drew her chair close to him and leaned against him as she told what she knew and what she suspected about Muriel.

Maryla, abandoned at her table, felt like another Ariadne, seeing her Dionysus interested in another woman. She assumed that Perry found Ida very fascinating. She could not understand why. She did not understand men, especially men like him.

She made no complaint; she did not go to him and scratch out his eyes and the eyes of his *vis-à-vis*. She did not send a waiter to recall him. She rose meekly and slipped out of the cabaret to the nest where he had established her.

Perry did not miss her. He forgot her entirely. He

listened spellbound to Ida's confession. She told him where Muriel was held captive in the cellar, and, as well as she could remember, the neighborhood of the place where Muriel was to be taken at midnight. Achilles had not divulged the exact address to her. He did not believe in overtaxing the fidelity of women. She could recall only that it was up near Spuyten Duyvil Creek, "beyond a place where cabbages grow on a wall."

This last sounded a trifle remarkable to Perry, but he was not sure where cabbages grew; he had never cared whether they grew or not.

Perry was fearless where his own safety was concerned. Life was such a joke to him that he could be as brave as a lion on the least important occasion. Now the occasion was most important. His courage was ready, he needed only the wits to know what to do and where to go.

He hurried to his table, paid his bill, noted the absence of Maryla with relief, and left the restaurant unsensationally. He found his chauffeur dozing outside and told him to make for Allen Street.

"You don't mean Allen Street, sir?" said Groden.

"I do! And hurry!"

"But Allen Street is on the lower East Side, sir."

"That's the one I mean. Get there as fast as you can without being arrested."

The moment Red Ida saw Perry leave the cabaret, she repented her caprice, longed to gulp back the words. She dashed through the startled table-aisles to the sidewalk outside, and found Groden just closing Perry into his limousine. She thrust her clasped hands in at the open window and pleaded:

"Say, listen! What I just been tellin' you—forget it, will you?"

"Never, my dear young lady," Perry had answered, gallantly. "I'll never forget it. And if it proves true, I'll remember it handsomely."

"But I had a right not to 'a' told you!" she urged.

Worthing had only o

ught—Muriel's safety.

Groden, not seeing her, had gone to his place and started the car in motion.

"Watch out, my dear, you'll be hurt," Perry said, and thrust her hands away.

She called after him: "It ain't true. I was on'y joshin' you."

But he had not heard. He had been too bent on Muriel's rescue to pay further heed to Ida. She stood a moment on the sidewalk, wringing her hands, till she saw that the passers-by were taking notice of her. She gave them a bit of lip and ran back into the cabaret.

Manners were informal there and explanations cynical. Her exit had provoked a laugh. Her return was greeted with ironic applause. The simian pianist had been "vamping till ready," and she broke into the song from the door.

But she was beset by the thought of her treachery to her husband—not much of a husband, but the only one she ever had. She could not finish her song. She mumbled excuses to leave, dashed for her hat and her cloak, and ran to the Subway, looking like an escaped masquerader. Perhaps she could get home in time to warn Shang. He would kill her, but she might save him.

Meanwhile Perry's car ran with the velvet speed of a panther, slowing up only where a policeman was visible, or probable.

The impetuous Merithew had set out to the rescue at full tilt. Gradually it came over him that he had no weapon to tilt with. He was going to raid a dive in the slums, not merely single-handed, but empty-handed. By the time his car was finishing its passage through Central Park he was convinced that he must have help. But whom could he get, and where? The police were the last people he wanted to call in, since the police implied the reporters, and he had a profound abhorrence of publicity.

The offices of private detectives were not open at midnight, and, besides, he did not know any private detectives.

But Perry was not destined to visit the slums this night. As the car came out of the black forest of Central Park into the glistening Plaza, he heard a shot. He thought it only the usual blow-out. He heard other shots —a sound of voices. He had heard the shots and shouts of Grebe as the taxicab that Worthing was driving had approached Fifth Avenue in its pursuit of the gunmen.

Perry rapped on the glass. His car stopped. He put his head out and saw that there was excitement on the moonlit reaches of upper Fifth Avenue.

The gleaming façades of the Plaza Hotel confronted him. Merithew had a large hotel acquaintance. He owed so much money at so many hotels that he was welcome everywhere. He was slow at paying bills, but ever ready with tips.

He thought he knew one of the house detectives—a man named Lumm—at the Plaza; he signaled Groden to pull up at the hotel.

He found Lumm on the outer steps, whither he had been drawn by the sound of the warning shots from Grebe's pistol. The detective was more or less disguised as a guest in a dinner jacket.

"Oh, hello!" said Perry. "What's the racket up the street?"

"I don't know, sir. I was just going to telephone headquarters and see if they know."

"Good idea," said Perry. "And I'd like a word with you when you come back."

Perry went to the tobacco-stand, replenished his case, lighted a cigar, and was telling the châtelaine in charge how unusually stunning she was this evening, when he felt a hand on his arm.

"Pet" Bettany was murmuring to him with saccharinity: "Buy me a box of cigarettes, dear. I'm with Winnie Nicolls, and he doesn't believe in women smoking, and I'm famishing. Be quick."

The experienced tobacconette slid a box surreptitiously

to Perry, who slipped it to Pet, who smuggled it into her handkerchief just as "Winnie" Nicolls escaped from the hook of some other fisherwoman and came back to Pet's bait.

Winnie was in love with Muriel, and afraid of Pet; but Muriel had treated him shabbily, and he had fallen easy prey to Pet.

"Hello!" said Perry. "I'm just getting some cigars. Have one?"

"No, thanks," said Winnie, who did not like Merithew even well enough to smoke his tobacco. He took out his own cigar-case and helped himself.

Perry recognized the faint insult with a smile. "Your mother doesn't like me, either," he said. "She invited my wife to her big splurge and left me out."

Winnie's only comment was a puff of smoke that veiled his smile. Perry said:

"Didn't she invite you, either, Pet?"

"Oh yes, but I can't go," Pet smiled. "Poor mother is not well enough to be left. I just ran out for a little air in Winnie's new racer."

"I see—you're in your trained-nurse uniform," said Perry, with a glance at her iridescent gown with much skin revealed and much more indicated. "That gown is the sort that F. P. A. called 'Low and Behold in the front, and the V de Bohême in the back.'"

Then Mr. Lumm, the house detective, came back and said to him: "I called up headquarters, Mr. Merithew, and they say that Miss Muriel Schuyler has been kidnapped."

Winnie Nicolls's cigar dropped from his lips. Pet's box of cigarettes fell from her handkerchief.

"I knew that," said Perry.

The detective went on: "The gang's got her in a taxi-cab. Those shots was the police after her. They're headed north for the Bronx. Prob'ly they're in Central Park by now, I guess."

Winnie Nicolls did not pause for good-nights. He

dashed across the lobby, bowling over two pages. Pet did not notice his flight. She was listening to Merry Perry, who was saying to the detective:

"That's what I want to see you about." He led Lumm aside. "I think I know where they're taking Miss Schuyler. I need a man and a gun. You come along."

"I can't very well get off," said Lumm. "The manager wouldn't like it."

"Where's the manager?" said Perry.

He seized the detective by the elbow and haled him to the office. Now Pet found herself alone—in the pitiful fate of a young girl alone in the Plaza at midnight.

She was swearing-mad. It was the starter who helped her into a taxicab. When she got home she told the driver to "charge it to the hotel." She had no account at the hotel.

Winnie Nicolls was a timid young son of Crœsus, except in the saddle or under the wheel of an automobile. There he became a demon of recklessness.

He leaped into his ninety-horse-power racer, and swung into the Park with the swathe of a huge scythe. Through the deep thickets he drove his car, groaning at the sinuous indirectness of the roads. He went hooting through and paid no heed to the vain challenges of policemen. But when he shot from the top gate of the Park at One Hundred and Tenth Street he did not know which way to turn.

He saw a stranded taxicab at whose side Worthing stood with the dejected Roundsman Grebe. He rushed to them and called out:

"I say, did you see a taxicab go this way?"

"We're follerin' one now," said Officer Grebe. "We can use you."

"Get in!" said Winnie, swinging his door open with one hand. Worthing and Grebe ran alongside and stumbled in.

"Up Seventh Avenue it went, most likely," said Grebe.

But when they reached this broad highway to the north an officer was there who saw that Grebe was a policeman and ran out, calling to him:

"They went up the Cat'edral Parkway. I whistled 'em to stop, but—"

His voice trailed off into silence, for Winnie threw, as it were, his bridle on the neck of the steed.

"This is something like," said Grebe, as the racer plunged forward with the zeal of a running-horse breaking from the starting-wire. The car throbbed indeed with the tremendous energy of a runaway stallion. It snorted and bolted, and galloped *ventre-à-terre* without shock of hoofs.

On the great letter "S" of the loop of the Elevated a train crawled like a caterpillar with gleaming scales. Then the heights called Morningside—because they are on the Eveningside—rose to uphold the "Acropolis of New York"; but the car did not halt at the steep climb. It ran up the Heights with a swoop of joy like a wave boiling up a cliff.

The keen-eyed huntsmen paid no heed to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine—twelve years building and still hardly more shapely than a beached whale, with derricks and cranes still part of the sky-line and a few angels standing about as stiffly as prematurely arrived guests.

Winnie Nicolls and his company were wondering which of the two roads to take through Morningside Park. There was no time for debate. Winnie, like a good boy, turned to the right. In the taxicab that carried Muriel Achilles had chosen the left.

The glory of that great bastioned mesa-land overlooking the city, as a cliff a dark sea twinkling with stars, was only irritation for the pursuers. They needed only a vile brown taxicab to make any prospect beautiful.

As they whizzed along Winnie began to ask questions which answered the unspoken questions Worthing was unwilling to begin.

"Is it true that Miss Muriel Schuyler is kidnapped? I was at the Plaza Hotel taking supper with Miss— Well, I'm Mr. Winthrop Nicolls, by the way. We heard shots. The house detective called up the police, and they told him it was Miss Schuyler. Are you sure that it is?"

Worthing, with a doleful recognition of the man's wealth and his evident interest, assured him that it was.

Winnie chuckled: "I hope we can catch the rascals. I'd like to take her home in this car. She rode in it the first day I got it—christened it—sort of."

They sped through the park and turned out on Amsterdam Avenue at One Hundred and Twenty-third Street. It was free of taxicabs as far beyond as they could see.

"We must have overrun them," said Winnie, and whirled to the left. Somewhere below a taxicab dashed across the avenue, bound west. Winnie threw all his power on, and burned the pavement to One Hundred and Sixteenth Street, then turned west on the inside wheels, Grebe hanging out like a mechanician in a motor-race.

They could just see a red tail-light glimmering into the trees of Riverside Drive. They went through Columbia University with no interest in its scholastic halls, doubly silent with night and vacation-time. Even the Seth Low Library—the noblest monument a man ever built his father—did not win a glance.

"It took me five years to go through Columbia before," Winnie said. "This is better." He always said that when he motored through. He used to motor through so that he might say it. He had to say it even now when his heart was full of such post-graduate excitement.

Down into the borderland they plunged, then up along the darkling Hudson unshackled with bridges. Where Grant's peak-capped tomb divided the road, Winnie chose this time the left since the right had proved unlucky before. He had lost the red will-o'-the wisp altogether now.

He reined in his steed, a little bewildered. "They

couldn't have stopped at Claremont for a drink, could they?"

Grebe and Worthing felt sure that they had not. So he ran down the hill and out on the long, long viaduct that carries the Drive across the deep gorge of Manhattan Valley.

Across its whole quarter of a mile of length there was not a soul visible, not a policeman or a vehicle of any kind.

Winnie let the car run on while they discussed the possibilities. They had overlooked the road at the side of the viaduct which dips steeply down into the valley. Achilles, with Grecian wile, had assumed that this was the safer to take since it was the more unreasonable.

Worthing, who had lost half his zeal in the presence of his overwhelming rival, had a half-hearted idea:

"They'll be going north somewhere, most likely. We'd better go on; we might head them off yet."

They maintained a listless gait to the end of the viaduct and beyond a little. The Drive was again one sleepy solitude. Worthing turned to look back, and caught sight of a taxicab with two men on the front seat just pulling up the hill from under the viaduct.

He called out: "There they are! Back there!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

IN the still air Achilles, who had seen the car ahead, heard Worthing's voice. Muriel in the dark heard only a faint cry, but she heard Achilles' startled command:

"To de right! To de right! Dat ain't no taxicab. I wonner who dose guys are. Police, I bet. Dey want us, all right."

The overworked taxicab groaned up the hill of One Hundred and Thirty-sixth Street drearily. Now it was Achilles' turn to complain of the fagged-out motor.

They had worried to the top of the rise before they saw the headlights of Nicolls's car swing round the corner below. They resisted the temptations of Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue because they were wide and brightly lighted and dotted with policemen.

They chugged on to Convent Avenue, and Muriel could hear again that quaver of anxiety in Achilles' voice as he leaned far out and spoke through a twisted neck in a strangled voice.

"Here dey come, and goin' like a house afire. Toin nort' here. We gotta do some dodgin'. Where are we, anyway?"

"Convent Avenyeh," said Blip. "De Convent of de Sacred Heart is just below. Me sister used to go to it."

"To hell wit' your sister—and your taxicab," said Achilles. "If dose guys gits too clost, I gotta take a shot at deir tires; dey's nuttin' to it."

They ran under the arched gateways into the quadrangle of a slumbering group of buildings. There was

something about the white-bordered architecture that gave Achilles discomfort.

"Say, what is dis place," he whined, "a jail or a bug-house?"

"It's de City Colludge," said Blip.

"Well, git out of it; it makes me oneasy." He strained to look back again. "Dere's deir search-light waverin'. We got 'em guessin'. No, dey're comin' dis way. If we on'y had anudder car. Gawd! to be froze to a dump-cart like dis. I'll fix you when I git out! We gotta shift to somebody's else's machine if we have to shoot de cheffure. Gawd! look at 'em come! Ain't dey got no respect for de speed laws? Toin off o' here—to de right! To de right!"

"Dere ain't no street to de right," growled Blip.

"To de left den, you loafer!"

The rattle-brained Blip turned to the left, up One Hundred and Forty-third Street.

"Toin to de nort' on de foist street you cometa," Achilles snarled. But at Amsterdam Avenue there were two policemen. They were waiting. They read the long-desired number—646416—on the radiator and they ran forward, shouting:

"Say, we want you! Stop or I'll fire!"

Achilles took aim at the nearer of them, but Blip swerved back to the southwest into Hamilton Place, which ran on the bias with the other streets. Achilles did not fire. But both policemen did, and one of them sent a bullet into an overheated rear shoe, and it blew up with a terrifying sound. But the cab ran on unchecked, though roughlier.

Shang and Pep thought that a cannon had planted a shell under the car, and they crowded down into the small foot-space, dragging Muriel with them. And just in time, for another bullet glancing from the pavement made a ricochet and tore a ragged hole through the leather. Another smashed the little mica window in the back curtain.

The very taxicab seemed to take fright and to speed

with final energy. In their chattering terror Shang and Pep let go of Muriel's wrists. Now she tore at the gag, released herself from it, and, gulping in a joyous breath of air, flung herself toward the window and sent one wild, white shriek into the blue stillness.

Shang clamped his hand over her mouth and dragged her back. There was a brief wrestle in the huddle, then Pep Chu's grim little voice in Muriel's ear:

"Shut up, damn you, or I'll croak you in a minute. Dat's a gun I got against you, and I'll blow a hole in you if you make a whisper. I'd just as soon as not—a little sooner!"

There was a maniac twang in his voice that frightened her to silence. There were no more shots, no noise. They had outrun the police again.

Muriel's angry soul longed to fight free, but she did not want the freedom of death. She wanted to get back to life and her mother and her father.

She let the men lift her back to the seat. She began to sob.

Again that insane command of Pep's, the pressure of that muzzle under her arm. She felt what a bullet would do, and she was too cowed even to weep.

She heard Achilles muttering softly to Blip in terror equal to her own. Then she heard a note of joy in his voice.

"Toin up here. Toin up here."

"Dat's a hill. We can't make it."

"Go as fur as you kin. Dere's what I been prayin' for. Go on past him!"

Blip turned into the steep of One Hundred and Thirty-eighth Street, where the great red building of the Jewish Orphan Asylum in a big walled yard stood up against the sky. On his left a row of apartment-houses was aligned with a zigzag of stoops down the slanting street.

In front of one of the lowest houses stood a limousine with a chauffeur asleep on the box. His employer had

SHE made no resistance. Shang simply kept saying, "Remember, lady, remember."

perhaps brought home his fiancée or somebody from a late dance, and was lingering over the farewells inside.

The taxicab did not wake the chauffeur as it rattled by and stopped at the opposite curb. Achilles did not wake him as he pussy-footed across the street, stepped lightly on the running-board, bent over, throttled the chauffeur with his left hand, and gave his popping eyes a sight of a hideous little automatic pistol.

Achilles explained in a hasty whisper: "Say, young feller, if you wanta keep your healt', you run dis car where I tell you. I'll be inside wit' some frien's. I'll have dis gun under de back of your conk, and if you don't say what I tell you to, and nuttin' else, I'll shoot it off. Do you get me?"

The chauffeur got him. Achilles motioned. Blip opened the door and beckoned. Shang and Pep supported Muriel to the pavement and helped her across the street. She made no resistance and no sign.

Pep simply kept saying, "Remember, lady, remember."

In the light of the lamp-post she glanced down and saw the weapon. It was an ugly thing.

Achilles rushed his passengers aboard with the rough speed of a Brooklyn Bridge street-car conductor. He crowded in after them. He lowered the front glass and made them all crouch down. Then he set his pistol between the shoulder-blades of the chauffeur and said:

"Beat it now. Toin up dis foist street. If anybody asts you did you see a taxicab, tell de trut'. Say you seen it goin' up where you seen it. But don't say no more or —or you know!"

The limousine moved off down the hill and whirled round the corner. The chauffeur had not spoken yet. Nor did he speak till he met a racing-car carrying three wildly excited men, one of them a policeman, who yelled:

"Did you see a taxi go this way?"

Then the chauffeur motioned back and answered: "Yes, they—they turned up—up down there."

It was a weak and choking voice, but he said it. He said it again to the two policemen who followed on foot in lumbering breathlessness.

Then he tooled the luxurious car on and on and on through Amsterdam Avenue to St. Nicholas, to Broadway —an everlasting Broadway. Muriel gave up all hope now, and asked Heaven only for an end to the journey. She could tell, by the rollicking reports Achilles made to Blip, that there was no sign of pursuit—no car at all following them.

At the Ship Canal Bridge a group of policemen waiting for a taxicab paid no attention whatever to the limousine.

They had paid no more attention to Perry Merithew's limousine, which had gone by a little earlier, carrying Mr. Merithew and a heavily armed house detective smoking an excellent cigar.

The lowlands at the edge of Spuyten Duyvil Creek, where it leaves the Harlem River just long enough to circle Marble Hill and return, are unhandsome in the daylight. After midnight they take on a kind of spooky quality due rather to the deserted warehouses, train-sheds, and rookery cottages than to the tradition of the devil who took the shape of a great herring and dragged old Peter Stuyvesant's defiant trumpeter down in the hungry waters.

"Ghastly sort of place, eh?" Perry was saying to Mr. Lumm, as the car bumped and poked this way and that around Two Hundred and Thirtieth Street into the rutty Spuyten Duyvil road.

"The girl said the house was not far from a place where cabbages grow on a wall," he went on. "Sounds sort of vague; but that was as much as her dear husband told her."

"It listens like a dope-dream to me," said the detective. "I ain't no farmer, but I've et cabbages, and I never heard of 'em growin' on walls. Maybe she's thinkin' of turnips."

"Look!" said Perry. "There they are!"

Groden had stopped the car so that its headlights illuminated a steep hillside of shalelike formation with little shreds of earth like mortar between stones. In this poor soil a fond and ingenious householder had wrung from miserly nature sustenance enough for rows on rows of cabbages. On this almost vertical field they grew in generous profusion like massive green roses on a wall.

"Well, I'll be damned," said the detective.

"I'm with you," said Perry. He signaled his chauffeur to move on. They came soon to a dark and narrow angle of the road and stopped.

With difficulty Groden turned his car and faced back along the road, covering it with his headlights. In the shadow Perry, all atremble with joy of the adventure, took his stand with a revolver in his hand. The detective moved down a little farther with two in his hands.

After a long, long wait two other eyes gleamed down the road like a great wild beast's. They came forward with almost questioning deliberation. Groden honked his horn. Blip was now at the wheel of the stolen limousine; the chauffeur had been dropped in the dark some distance back. Blip honked his horn. Achilles yelled:

"Git out de way!"

The invisible Groden honked his horn for answer. Blip stopped his car. Achilles jumped off and ran forward to protest. He ran into the dark and found Groden's gun staring at him.

"Put 'em up," said Groden.

They went up.

Then the detective's voice came from the shadow near Blip.

"All out, boys. This is your last stop."

Shang and Pep, imagining that they had reached their destination, clambered out on either side, shaking their legs. Pep clambered into the detective's revolver. Shang heard Pep gasp:

"Beat it, de bulls."

Pep surrendered.

Shang slid off in the dark and vanished.

Muriel, wondering, saw a hand outstretched, and heard a purring voice:

"Miss Schuyler, permit me."

"Mr. Merithew!" She gasped as she got out. "But wh-where's Dr. Worthing?"

"Doctor who? There's no doctor for miles! Are you hurt? Are you ill?"

"Yes, I—I believe I am."

And then at last she learned what it was to faint.

CHAPTER XXXIX

NOTHING surprises or upsets a man so much, or finds him so unready as a full answer to a prayer or the complete success of a scheme. Those who have petitioned for rain and got it, never yet have had their umbrellas with them nor their galoshes on.

When little Mrs. "Red Ida" Ganley, in an emulsion of remorse and revenge, told Perry Merithew that her husband and his pack had kidnapped Muriel Schuyler, Merry Perry made a knightly sortie in his unwarlike limousine. All the way he had been praying and planning, but praying apparently without faith, since his triumph astounded him utterly. Evidently prayers are granted also to skepticism.

At any case, there stood Perry with Muriel Schuyler comfortably aswoon and draped safely across his arm; and there stood three of the four gangsters with their hands aloft in front of his pistol and the pistols of his chauffeur and the house detective.

What Dr. Worthing and his taxi-driver, and Winthrop Nicolls and his ninety-horse-power racer, and all the police force of New York had failed to accomplish after a ferocious man-hunt through the city, Perry Merithew had jauntily achieved without half trying.

Now that his problem was solved, it opened up a new problem. As always happens.

To turn the criminals over to the authorities was plainly his civic duty. But that meant to turn Muriel over to the higher authorities of the newspapers. She had suffered enough from the gunmen, he thought, without being thrown into the power of the penmen.

Perry was so befuddled with the problem that the neglected Muriel, despairing of being resuscitated by the proper attentions, came back to consciousness unaided. In the gloom of the lonely road she felt at first that she was sitting up in her own bed after a nightmare. The searing glare of the headlights confused her further. Then she descried the gunmen with their palms uplifted in priestly attitude. She remembered the long Brocken-ride she had made through midnight New York. She felt the raw pain of her abraded lips, the ache of her jaws from the gag. She winced again at the bitter fact that it was Perry Merithew and not Dr. Worthing who had saved her. She could not understand it at all.

Perry thought that Muriel, having been the innocent victim of criminals, should not be subjected to worse punishment at the hands of justice. He had very decent traits, had Perry, and he was in one of his most admirable moods.

He asked the house detective to guard the prisoners while he conferred with Miss Schuyler. He led Muriel a few paces aloof from the immobilized gang. She began at once a belated speech of gratitude.

"It's perfectly glorious of you to have saved me. I don't know how I can find words to tell you how grateful I am."

"Don't try," said Perry. "It isn't worth the trouble. It is reward enough to have been of any service to you, Miss Schuyler. But I'm in great distress. I don't know what to do next."

She had got her thanks off her chest, and she felt better. She said, curtly: "The next thing is to get me home somehow, isn't it? I'm pretty tired, you know."

"You must be, you poor child; but what am I to do with these three little gunmen?"

"You'd better keep them out of my reach or there won't be enough left of them to turn over to the police."

"That would be the best way out of it, if you could

destroy them entirely, because the police include the reporters, and the head-lines, interviews, portraits on the front page."

Muriel had been brought up in an honest, press-fearing family. She had seen what the newspapers had done to certain of her acquaintances who had stumbled into the calcium-light.

"O Lord!" she groaned. "That 'll be worse than being gagged in the dark. I don't see what I've done to deserve all this except to disobey my father. It pays me up for going slumming against his orders. I'm glad he and mother are on the yacht and won't know about it." She fumed a moment, then lifted her head bravely. "All right. If I've got to be in the head-lines I've got to be."

"It's not only that," said Perry, in miserable confusion before such a nice young girl in such a woeful tangle, "but, you see—I hardly know how to explain it—but, you see, I'm a married man."

"As if I didn't know it! Don't I know your wife? She's charming," said Muriel.

Perry cleared his throat uncomfortably. "Yes, thanks. But it seems that—it seems that—er—married men must not rescue nice young girls. That privilege belongs to nice young bachelors."

Muriel could have limited this further to nice young doctors, and her heart was full of wild sighs of, "Oh, why couldn't it have been Dr. Worthing!" Still she must not begrudge Mr. Merithew his glory.

"I don't see why anybody should object to your rescuing me?" she said. "I met you in my father's office. You were most kind about giving me that money. Your motives have all been as noble as can be."

"I'm afraid that the reporters and the gossips are not in the habit of imputing noble motives to me," Perry sighed, and felt in his flippant heart something of the vast regret of a fallen woman for lost innocence, and the yet keener regret for lost reputation. While he smiled bit-

terly at catching himself in an ingenuous mood, Muriel was asking:

"But how on earth did you happen to be here? How did you know they would be taking me along this awful road?"

"That's another complication," said Perry, thinking of the cabaret, the betrayed and neglected Maryla, and of the dance with the gunman's wife. These things were hard to explain agreeably.

"Anyway, it's wonderful of you!" said Muriel. "I should think you would want everybody in the world to know of your heroism. I'm sure if I saved anybody I'd advertise it myself if I couldn't get it published any other way."

"Thanks. That's very nice of you. But, you see, my being a married man and all—and the young woman who told me being married to one of the gunmen—and I suppose I ought not to have been at the cabaret—it would make it very awkward for everybody. People would wonder about you—how it should be me, of all men, who should know you were kidnapped and where you were and all that. You see, it's really pretty well mussed up."

"I see," Muriel murmured.

Perry went on: "It wouldn't be very nice for you, or Mrs. Merithew, or for me. Of course, I don't matter. I haven't any reputation to lose. But that's what makes me the very worst person to be mixed up in it. I ought to have sent somebody else, but the time was so short and I was rattled and— You understand, don't you?"

Muriel understood darkly. She was as good as a girl could be; but she was neither blind nor deaf, and young girls know more than they are politely supposed to know, and they overhear more gossip than they are expected to understand. She knew well what a menace gossip is and how like a creeping acid it discolors and gnaws at whatever it reaches.

She remembered her father's dislike for Perry Merithew,

and the general tone people took when they spoke of him. She understood that there must be guilt back of his confusion, and she tried to imagine the sort of guilt it was. She imagined it wrong, of course.

In fact, she assumed that the gunman's wife was Perry's sweetheart. She remembered "Red Ida's" part in her own capture, and she asked suddenly, with startling irrelevance in Perry's mind:

"Was the—the woman who told you about me a little skinny, tough Bowery mucker with red hair and awful clothes?"

To Muriel's world the much-reformed and highly respectable Bowery was still a name for everything slummish.

Perry gasped: "Yes, she was. Why?"

"Ugh!" said Muriel, with a shudder of disgust for her rescuer. So that was the sort of woman this Mr. Merithew went to cabarets with! That was the sort of man he was!

She retreated from him in a nausea of repugnance. She had danced with him, and he had danced with Red Ida! She did not understand the immemorial democracy of vice that has made the Sultans bow to the female slaves from the market-place or from the kitchen; sent many a King Cophetua to the dusty feet of many a beggar-maid, and brought countless coronets and top-hats to grass or carpet before little bare feet, little brogans, and little dancing-slippers. Snobbery ends at the boundaries of sex.

But Muriel had this to learn and grow used to. It is one of the bitterest lessons that women meet in life. Perry Merithew was the first example that confronted her, and she loathed him—temporarily. She blamed him for daring to know her; she blamed him for daring to lend her money to do charity with. All he was good for now was to complete her rescue and vanish. What an abominable fate it was that she had to be rescued by him! She was instantly as determined to thwart the reporters as Perry was. Suddenly the resolution came to her:

"There's just one thing to do," she said, grimly. "Turn the gunmen loose."

"Let them go?" Perry gasped.

"Certainly. They're not of the slightest use to me. And Heaven knows I've had enough of their society. I'm sick of the sight of them. And I'm really horribly sleepy."

Perry glanced at the tableau in the brilliant glow of the four headlights.

The chauffeur, Groden, in deep silhouette rimmed with light, covered the three gangsters with two revolvers. They stood with arms up like jumping-jacks. The detective, Lumm, was "frisking" them scientifically, with deft prods, probes, and slaps. He had already built up in the road a little pyramid of weapons; five revolvers, two knuckle-dusters, two sandbags, three ugly clasp-knives, a slungshot, and some boxes of cartridges.

The look on the gunmen's faces was the more desperate for being baffled. Hatred made fiends of them. Perry mumbled:

"It seems hardly right to turn them loose again; they're like mad dogs. Besides, I'm afraid that if I let them go I might be committing some crime or other. It might let me in for a sentence to jail or the penitentiary, or something."

"That would hardly do, either," Muriel yawned.

Perry shook his head in amused adoration. He did not believe in logic, arithmetic, consistency, gratitude, or breeches for women. He was used to being used. It rather endeared Muriel to him to find her the spoiled child. But he sighed one of his most effective sighs.

"We might ask Lumm," he said. "He's a detective." He raised his voice and called him "Oh, Mr. Lumm, would you mind coming here a moment?"

"Sure!" said Lumm. He cautioned Groden: "Keep 'em covered, and if any one of 'em so much as wiggles his little finger shoot 'em all down."

This pretty thought seemed to terrify Groden more

than the three musketeers. Groden's native weapon was an automobile, not artillery. While he stood imagining himself piling up the dead in front of him, Lumm joined Merithew in the twilight by the limousine.

Perry explained the situation to him and the desired escape from the newspapers. Lumm was puzzled. He dealt largely in the suppression of notoriety, and he sympathized. Still, he was not inspired, and he rubbed his large chin hard without result. In the midst of his perplexity Achilles, who had taken Groden's measure, whispered his fellows:

"I'm gona take a chanst wit' dat guy."

He made a sudden leap forward at Groden. Groden was afraid to shoot. He fell back in disorder, tripped on his own feet, and sat down hard. Achilles bent to snatch a weapon from the heap on the ground. Lumm, who had been watching with one eye, sent a shot between his very hands.

Achilles turned a sort of cart-wheel backward and was instantly lost in the dark, for the two automobiles confronting each other with blazing headlights formed a crater of blinding radiance that made the enveloping gloom impenetrable to the eye. The moon was struggling behind a mob of clouds.

Pep Chu and Blip followed Achilles' example and whisked out of sight with uncanny abruptness.

Lumm started forward in pursuit; but Perry seized his arm. "Let 'em go."

"What!" Lumm snarled in a rage of disgust. "Leave 'em put a thing like that over on me?"

But Perry clung to his sleeve. "You do what I tell you to do. They've solved the problem for us."

Lumm remembered that he was not a policeman. He did not love the police, nor they him. He understood. He grinned. "I'm next," he said. "I get you."

Perry and Lumm were laughing at Groden's efforts to explain how he would 'a' let 'em have it on'y for slippin',

when there came from the dark shore-land of Spuyten Duyvil Creek a sound of splashing, floundering, and cries for help. Achilles had run into the water.

"Go save him!" Muriel cried. "He'll drown."

"No such luck, Miss," said Lumm.

There was a silence that might mean anything.

Muriel felt a new dread, a kind of guilt, a great fear, an instinct of flight.

"Let's get away—quick!"

"That's best," said Perry. "Climb into my car."

Lumm and Groden started to gather up the arsenal in the road.

"Throw those things into the water," said Perry. They flung them into the dark, and some splashed and some thudded.

Perry helped Muriel into his limousine. Lumm climbed to the front seat with Groden. The car moved forward slowly past the other limousine with its staring headlights.

Groden paused to ask, "What becomes of that car, sir?"

"It's none of ours," said Perry. "Somebody will find it. Go on."

"Wait, wait!" Muriel cried. "The money! It may be in there."

Groden ran back, fumbled about in the deserted limousine, found the handbag on the floor, and returned with it.

Shang and Pep had remembered to transfer it from the taxicab to the limousine, but had forgotten it in the terror of their abrupt arrest. Shang Ganley, the first to escape, was the first to remember it as he fled penniless in the dark. Among all his regrets this would hurt him the longest.

Muriel opened the handbag. There lay the three thousand-dollar bills. She clutched them out with joy and thrust them into Merithew's palm.

"Take them," she said.

"Me? Why? What is it?"

"It's the money you gave me to rescue the Italian boy with. He cost only two thousand. There's your change."

"But—er—is he rescued?"

"I don't know. I hope so. But I've done all I can."

"This money, though—really—it embarrasses me."

"Not half as much as it does me."

He offered it back, but she pushed it aside. She felt that somehow she was absolving herself from her obligations to this awful person.

Perry felt the lack of cordiality, the vague displacency of her manner, and it hurt him sharply. He wanted her good favor increasingly as it proved elusive.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Any time you want it again—"

"I'll never want it again! I've finished with slum work and—" She could hardly say "and you." She hardly dared to think it, it was so hideously ungrateful. Gratitude is one of the most difficult of emotions.

Perry sighed again, and put the money in his waistcoat pocket as if it were dross. Yet, after all, three thousand dollars was three thousand dollars. It rendered him indulgent. He would save the insolent little wretch in spite of herself, finish his rescue, and have done with her.

"Groden," he called, "don't go back the way we came. We may be asked questions. Isn't there some other way round about?"

Groden nodded. He knew his Greater New York, and held north to Van Cortlandt Park South, and then ran southerly along the broad ribbon of Mosholu Parkway, along the rim of Bronx Park into the Southern Boulevard, into the Boston Road and the upper twists of Third Avenue and across its Harlem River bridgeway; reentering Manhattan five miles from the point of exit. Muriel hardly spoke during the long journey. She was heartily ashamed of herself, but she could not forgive fate

for landing her at Perry Merithew's mercy, when Dr. Worthing would have been, and tried to be, and ought to have been, her rescuer.

Perry was surprised that he did not, could not, feel more indignant at Muriel's parsimony of appreciation. He tried to call her a worthless, ungrateful monster, but he could not feel angry at her. He felt angry at himself. He strove to find felicitous expressions, but he was as witless as a yokel.

And suddenly he recalled what different company this limousine, this little rolling *cabinet particulier* had housed. Aphra Shaler was not the first to loll there in his arm. Maryla had found it a spider's parlor. Pet Bettany had invaded it and demanded blackmail. Red Ida had leaned in at the window. And now Muriel Schuyler was there!

She was so different from the others; she did not belong at all. The other women crowded mistily into the narrow room like the ghosts of old sweethearts in the trite illustrations. They ridiculed Perry Merithew in the rôle of squire to a really nice girl like Muriel.

Here was astounding opportunity beyond the management of his dreams. He had desired her, and had not known how to get near her; and now he had saved her and she was in his stateroom! And he could not find a single wile to employ!

He felt untimely rather than unworthy. He regretted those sneering pretty ghosts that rode with him, but it was not the remorse of repentance. It was the more usual anger that we feel when our past turns out a bad investment.

What antipathy is more annoying than that between people who cannot be enthusiastic for the simple reason that they ought to be? Muriel and Perry rode for miles in silence, wasting the night and the solitude that would have been precious to how many separated lovers.

They spun through the sleeping streets of the upper town till they approached the corner where the big Schuyler mansion lifted its imperial façade to the obsequious moon. Then the detective, Lumm, leaned back and motioned to Perry, who opened the door a little and leaned forward at the crevice to hear Lumm's murmur:

"There's a bunch of min standin' around the enterance to Miss Schuyler's home, sir."

"Reporters!" Perry groaned. "Go on by!" He turned to Muriel. "The death-watch is waiting for you."

She was tired and peevish, and she snapped, "Oh, dear!" with more disgust than the phrase implied. But she did not object.

"Where to now, sir?" Lumm asked, later.

"God knows," said Perry. He turned to Muriel. "You could hardly go to my house, could you?"

Even Muriel was sophisticated enough now to answer, "Hardly!"

"Or to a hotel?"

"At this hour?"

She was always childishly resentful when she was sleepy. And now she was alone in New York—homeless. Perry had her on his hands indeed. He had fought to gain her, and now he could not be rid of her. His thoughts were blasphemous till Muriel exclaimed:

"There's my Aunt Cornelia—Mrs. Neff—if the house isn't closed up."

Perry knew Mrs. Neff. He seized the speaking-tube eagerly and directed Groden where to go.

The house was dark, ugly, forbidding. But Perry got down and rang the bell insistently, till at length a light was made up-stairs.

"Thank Heaven, Aunt Cornelia is home," Muriel sighed, and hurried from the limousine to the door.

But the caretaker appeared in a singularly matter-of-fact nightgown and protrusive bare feet. Behind him his fat wife looked like a startled bolster. They had supposed

that the police had rung the bell to notify them that the house was on fire or full of burglars.

They were hardly relieved to find Perry Merithew and Muriel Schuyler interceding for hospitality like wanderers in a one-house wilderness.

Muriel explained her plight with her most powdered-sugar graciousness, and they dared not turn her away, especially as they were in a chagrin of guilt: they were supposed to be sleeping in the basement, but, secure in the knowledge of Mrs. Neff's absence in Europe, they occupied her room and slept in her canopied four-poster as snugly as Christopher Sly, the tinker in the Induction.

Muriel remembered the light in the room she knew to be her aunt's. She was not quite too sleepy to be inspired. She smiled, tauntingly:

"I'll trade secrets with you, Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"Mrs. Rauch."

"Oh yes, Mrs. Rauch. Now, Mrs. Rauch, if you will promise not to tell Mrs. Neff I spent the night here, I'll promise not to tell her that you and your husband use her room."

"*Um Gotteswillen!*" gasped Mrs. Rauch.

Muriel went on. "And I won't mention the bottles of beer there on the console in the hall, if you promise."

Mrs. Rauch promised hastily, fervently.

Perry Merithew, lagging superfluous on the door-step, turned away, smirking at the galling irony of his situation. Muriel whistled him back with soft "Sst!" as if she were afraid to waken the street. She whispered:

"Hadn't somebody better be told not to look for me any further?"

"Good idea! I'll see to it."

"And Doctor—Doctor—the people who were pursuing us ought to be told."

"The police will send out word."

"Oh, that's nice! Well, good night! And thank you ever so much again—oh, ever so much!"

A competent reward, that! For that he had gone jousting through the city, risking his life gunning for gunmen. He thought of Pet Bettany's suspicions and accusations, and her cynical belief that his relations with Muriel Schuyler were intimate.

He realized again that cynics guess wrong as often as illusionists; he had known of so much evil enjoyed under the shield of innocence, and so much sturdy innocence flourishing in the face of evil appearance and opportunity.

Perry mused on life and yawned in its face, then he was startled awake by a remembrance of the latest errand Miss Schuyler had given him—she was making a positive chore-boy of him, and in the words of the bell-boy's song, "All I get is, Much obliged to you."

His car was passing a drug-store whose prescription clerk was just putting out his lights for the night, as drowsily as if he had taken his own drugs. Merithew signaled Groden to stop, ran into the store, found a pay-as-you-enter telephone in a booth, dropped a nickel in the slot, and called for "3100 Spring."

A policemanly voice growled: "Headquarters. What is it?"

Merithew asked, "Have you found Miss Schuyler yet?"

"Miss who? Oh yes—er—not exactly—not quite—but we're— We'll have her any minute now."

"Well, she's been found. The gang got scared—left her in a stolen limousine up Spuyten Duyvil way and ran off. She managed to get to the nearest house and—and now she's safe."

"The hellyousay! Where is she now?"

"That's my affair."

"Say, who are you, anyway?"

"Little Nemo. Good night. Better luck next time."

He hung up the receiver and left the booth, chuckling. The yawning druggist locked the door after him, and walked away.

By the time the police traced the number there was no one to answer the inspector's fierce call.

Perry went to his home, a little consoled by the exquisite privilege of teasing the police. Also his conscience rejoiced. He had done a virtuous act, seized an opportunity that vice had placed in his way. It was a paradox for his conscience. If he had not taken Maryla from her shop, if he had not danced with Red Ida, he could not have rescued Muriel. And nobody knew except those of whose silence he was secure.

He forgot Pet Bettany.

CHAPTER XL

IF Muriel complained that life was inartistic and badly constructed since it did not permit Dr. Worthing to rescue her, what were Dr. Worthing's thoughts? He had begun the hunt for her, battled for her, risked his life for her, only to have his taxi-charger expire under him. He was taken up as a mere passenger in Winnie Nicolls's racer, and learned that he had a plutocrat for a rival. At last, they could only overtake the gangsters' taxi when it was burned out and abandoned.

While they stood nonplussed by the apparent evaporation of its passengers, the owner of the limousine came forth and began to emit yelps of rage at the loss of his car and his chauffeur. Being only the owner, he could not, of course, remember the license number.

Nicolls whirled his big racer about and took up the vain pursuit; for a pursuit can hardly succeed when one does not know what he is pursuing nor which way it has gone. He darted frantically up this street, and down that, like a greyhound that has lost the scent. Eventually Roundsman Grebe telephoned to headquarters and learned what Merithew had telephoned—that Muriel had been left in the empty limousine. They ran up to Spuyten Duyvil and verified the limousine. There was the least possible satisfaction in that. The only comfort was that they made mutual company in their misery, the policeman, the millionaire, and the surgeon.

Red Ida had known her man well enough to know that he would suspect her first of all. Her fear of the police and her sorrow for Muriel, perhaps her jealousy of her,

had swept her to the terrific deed of telling Perry Merithew what she knew.

She had known nothing of the situation at home, and wondered what she might find there. In Allen Street she learned from excited crowds that a sensational taxicab battle had begun outside her tenement and rolled north. The sensation lost nothing in repetition.

Whether Shang came off victor or victim she could not know. But she knew that she was done for as his wife. She ran into her flat and began to hurl into the suit-case all her properties, pitifully few and tawdry.

She dreaded every moment to hear Shang come in. Her last glance about the room reminded her of his stock of drugs. Those were his ammunition. Without them his pursuit and his brain would be hampered. She emptied all the powders into the sink and washed them away. And what an exorcism of what countless demons that was! Then she hobbled along the streets, lugging her baggage till she reached a station of the Tube. A train carried her under the river into New Jersey.

Now she had leisure to ponder on her estate.

She had not paused to collect her wages of song at the cabaret. She had little in her purse and little to pawn. She remembered with sorrow her husband's promise that as soon as he had collected the ransom for Muriel Schuyler he would string her with diamonds till she looked like Luna Park at night.

She had cut herself out of that. She had broken up her home, thwarted her husband's loftiest ambition and put him in jeopardy—and for what? In order to save a multi-billionaire from having to spend a hundred thousand dollars, which he would miss about as much as his finger-nail parings!

Ida began to reproach herself for cowardice, infidelity, treachery, and imbecility. She called her soul before her soul and condemned it with the most scathing terms in her vocabulary.

"You big boob, you! You poor simp! you mutt! you snitch! you damn piker! O Gawd, what a boob I been!"

About this time the swift-footed Achilles, plastered with mud from his tumble into Spuyten Duyvil Creek, was still running as fast as his legs could carry him. Little Big Blip and Pep Chu were speeding north of Yonkers on a Warburton Avenue street-car.

But Shang Ganley had changed his course and turned back to town. He was lost in the wilderness where he was. His drug supply needed replenishing. And he wanted a word or two with his wife.

His instinct and his suspicion told him that Ida had betrayed him. After cautious reconnaissance he ran down into a lonely Subway station and was carried along that huge rat-hole under the city walls, down to his own nest.

He had hardly the car-fare to take him home to his gory settlement with her. He entered the flat with a heart on fire, and his opening words all ready.

The disarray of the room was evidence not only of flight, but of guilt. Shang fell into a spasm of rage. He cursed her with black venom. He threatened her with every form of destruction. He hated her with all his might. He could not hate her enough to suit him. He was too weak. His ring was empty.

He kicked aside a rug and lifted a plank in the floor, disclosing the little warehouse where he had kept the stock of drugs he had begun to sell, and ended by consuming. Never had he needed his stimulant so much as now. He must think of many things and outwit the witty officers of the witless law.

He thrust his shivering hand into the space between the joists. His eyes started. He bent down and stared into the dark. He lighted a match and held it till it burnt itself out at his heedless finger-tip. Then he fell flat and screeched. He sniveled, puled, bellowed, chewing his tears and jolting out curses and prayers for revenge.

She had confiscated all of his powder, every last "deck" of it! It was late, and it was farther to the nearest illicit drug-store than he had strength to go.

If there were lower depths of degradation to plumb, he could not imagine them: frustrated in his crime; robbed, betrayed, and abandoned by his wife; bereft of his vice; sick, penniless, despised; wanted by nobody on earth but the police.

After he had wept himself limp he climbed to his feet with the aid of a chair and staggered down the steps into the stupid, dirty daybreak of Allen Street.

He met a policeman who had just come for him. A general round-up had been ordered by the Deputy Commissioner. Achilles had been recognized by the policeman whose wrist he broke. The ownership of the taxicab had been instantly traced by its number. All acquaintances of Achilles and Blip were in demand at headquarters.

Shang was so dejected that it seemed good to have even a policeman to lean on. He was so frantic that he actually begged the officer for a little "happy dust," and got instead a push in the face that flung him against one of the latticed pillars of the Elevated Road. He clung there whimpering till he was peeled loose and half lugged, half carried to the station. By that time he was in such desperate plight of craving, and shrieking so fearfully, that the police surgeon had to provide for him before he could make the necessary answers for the record on the blotter. He was charged with nearly everything, from overspeeding plus resistance to arrest, to mayhem, abduction, and assault with intent to kill. When he was asked where his wife was, he said he did not know, and expressed such a violent craving to get her by the throat that they believed him.

Then he was escorted through the door and down a corridor in a human zoo, to a tiny room with a railing in front of it.

The city was a dormitory now, sound asleep save for a few corridors where night industries thrived. It was the pre-natal darkest hour, the silentest hour before the alarm-clocks of the humble begin their odious cock-a-doodle-doo.

Sleep and idleness were almost everywhere. In the newspaper-offices the huge spools of white paper had been swept through the presses and had emerged in folded journals carrying in the largest type the news that Muriel Schuyler was missing and in the power of a desperate gang. The telegraph-wires had spread the same story across the continent and beneath the seas while Muriel slept under an alien roof, slept like a boy that had played too hard and too long. Pet Bettany had cried and sworn herself to sleep and was dreaming herself a Nereid. Perry Merithew snoozed in his own bed. Red Ida tossed on a cot on foreign soil.

The only way to make a satisfactory code of practical morals is to draw up an ideal set of rules, of "shalls" and "shall nots," then to ignore their interferences, contradictions, and dilemmas, to deny all facts that disprove and exaggerate all facts that confirm, and to imagine rewards and remorses that do not arrive; in short, to refuse to permit reason to temper with faith.

For those who can content themselves with such ready-made mental clothes and feed on such tabloid spiritual food there may be contentment. But to those who recognize the swirl of impulse, the infinitely intricate involutions of duty and responsibility, of privilege and power, morals become, like the sciences, an endless source of fascinating mysteries that increase in number and wonder the further they are studied. Only the ignorant, the incurious, or the bigoted can feel positive and secure.

Here was a drastic instance of it: two highly immoral people, a man of luxury and a woman of squalor, had collaborated in the rescue of an innocent girl. They

should have been greeted with angelic music, flowers, and strange exultation. Already they were ashamed of their good deeds, rewarded with disapproval, and tangled in problems that were to grow steadily knottier, until Perry Merithew should be found dead in the slums and Red Ida pursued and arrested for his murder.

Worthing was so exhausted by the bad night he had made of it, that he had to smoke a lone cigar before he dared attempt sleep. A dull fury of resentment at his luck and jealousy against the anonymous rescuer of his idol tortured him with remorse as for a crime, the crime of missing a climax.

He had lost Muriel, and probably his job at Bellevue as well. His poor consolation was that it was not much of a job. As he was sinking into a sleep of exhaustion he remembered that he had arranged to be present at the operation on Happy Hanigan. Dr. Eccleston had granted him the privilege. He remembered also that Muriel had promised to be present, too, and hold the boy's hand when he went under the anesthetic. Of course she would not be there, after such an adventure, especially as she never kept engagements.

He turned his light out and himself in just as the dawn began unrolling its crimson ribbons beyond the eastern roofs.

CHAPTER XLI

THE morning papers had already gone to press when Perry Merithew informed the police that Muriel Schuyler was safe. Every paper advertised her on the front page as a vanished heiress, kidnapped by street-bucaneers plying under the piratical little flag on the clock of a taxicab.

The early, or "bulldog," editions for distant points simply described with infinite inaccuracy and contradiction the flight through the streets. The final editions described the discovery of the burnt-out derelict taxicab and the further disappearance of Muriel.

At eight o'clock that morning Jacob Schuyler's yacht reached New York. On the way to the up-town landing-place it paused long enough in the Bay to send ashore for the newspapers.

When they came aboard Jacob Schuyler and his wife were eating a poor folks' breakfast of oatmeal and eggs in the sumptuous dining-saloon of their sea-going château. Jacob glanced at the front page, as usual, before turning to the financial columns inside. He was about to move his eyes on when he paused, studied the head-lines again, and gasped with such pain and dread that his wife ran round the table to him, thinking he had a stroke of apoplexy. The stewards set down their trays with a thump and closed in. But it was only Jacob's tongue that was paralyzed. His hand was palsied. He held up an aspen newspaper and pointed with a stuttering forefinger to the dancing lines:

MURIEL SCHUYLER KIDNAPPED!

Young Daughter of Jacob Schuyler Carried Off by Desperate Gangsters in Bullet-Riddled Taxicab

POLICE OUTWITTED AND OUTFOUGHT

Several Bystanders Shot Down—Officer Lowber and Chauffeur Sbarra Not Expected to Live

HEIRESS'S WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN
GRAVE FEARS FOR HER SAFETY
HER SCREAMS IN VAIN

The art of the head-line builder consists in breaking news as ungently as possible. His work is not meant for the eyes of the victim's parents. But it was from headlines that the Schuylers learned of Muriel's adventure, and had no inkling of her comfortable security. Every paper seemed to add some new anguish to their eyes.

Horrors rained on Jacob Schuyler and his wife in volleys from the ambush of the unexpected. They had no warning and no shelter.

They were thoroughbreds trained to absorb shocks, but this struck them through the love of their child. They clung together in common and mutual terror like two children lost in the wood. Their hearts were both crying: "My poor child! My poor child!" and his was also crying, "My poor wife!" and hers, "My poor husband!"

There is an ancient idiocy permeating fiction and public pretense: that the rich do not love or care for their children as the poor do; that the rich prefer lap-dogs and leave their unwelcome offspring to liveried servants, while the poor unanimously devote their entire lives to their

young. As if generalized slanders or flatteries were ever worth the ink or the wind it takes to express them.

The Schuylers and the Angelilli were alike in family passion. They both adored their young, and could hardly endure the mere thought of their suffering.

Muriel's mother had borne her as other children are borne—she had given her blood, her milk, her tears, and her love to her daughter. Of course she was stricken at the picture of her danger. She went up and down, beating her palms together in frantic bewilderment, then flung herself on the lounge, frightened beyond weeping. Her weakness was the strength of Jacob. He had to be strong for her sake and in behalf of his lost ewe-lamb. He had to pretend a confidence he did not feel.

Money now stepped up in all its glorious panoply, its ever-readiness to help with the whole versatility of its enablements.

The distraught mother was too heavy for the bulky Jacob to lift, but his heart was the same for her as when, tall and slim and athletic, he had picked up the delicate wisp she was and carried her like a child. Now he was cumbrous and rusty in caresses, but he motioned the stewards and maids out, and lifted her till he could sit by her and hold her in his fat arms and pat her Bible-back and mumble:

"Don't you worry, honey. I'll bring her home to you in a jiffy. I'll spend a million—ten million—to run down that pack of wolves. Or if they want a ransom, I'll pay 'em all I've got."

His wife knew as well as he did that money was not omnipotent. She voiced the fears that had been sickening him.

"But suppose she has been killed! One of the police might have shot her. Or the gunmen might have stabbed her or beaten her to death to keep her from screaming. They may have thrown her out by the roadside somewhere, or down the Palisades. She may be lying wounded now

in some horrible ditch. They may have flung her into the river. Her body, her pretty little body, may be— Oh, Jacob, Jacob, Jacob! Oh, my baby, my little girl, my little baby girl!"

He tried to comfort her, but her panic was catching him by the throat. He rose in his might and set his teeth and his fists, and said, "I'll have her here in an hour!" She wanted to follow him, but her knees could not uphold her.

Jacob ran out on the deck, down the ladder to the launch, and ordered full speed ahead. The only vehicle he found ashore was an anachronistic hansom. He plunged in and ordered the man to gallop to his office. Arrived there, he hurried down the corridor of the building and ordered the elevator-man not to stop at any floor but his.

In the corridor above he flushed a covey of reporters. They clamored about him, chattering: "May I ask—" "Can you tell—" "Did the—" "Is it true that—" But he pressed right through, storming "Nothing say," "Absolutely nothing say!"

He was calling out orders as he entered his suite of offices.

"Send for Pinkerton! And Burns! Get the Commissioner of Police on the wire! Get District Attorney on another wire! Get my lawyer! Get me a motor-car! A fast one! Where's Chivot? Where in God's name is Chivot?"

In his own office Mr. Chivot heard him coming. Before Jacob could begin on him Mr. Chivot had said:

"She's safe, sir. Good morning."

"Wha—at?"

"Miss Muriel just telephoned in, sir. She said for you not to worry."

Jacob dropped into his chair and swiveled to and fro idiotically. His anxieties had collapsed under him.

"Where is she?" he asked. "At home?"

"No, sir. Miss Schuyler is at— She didn't say, sir, just where, but she gave me the number. I'll get it, sir."

"Did she ask for ransom—or anything? Where's my check-book? How much cash have we got?"

"Oh no, sir—pardon me— Ah, hello! . . . Yes. . . . Is this. . . . One moment, please."

He set the magic instrument before old Jacob and Jacob groaned into the transmitter one husky, "Hello?" He got back a lilt of youth and love:

"Hello-o, Daddy! Bless your darling old heart. And mother—how's mother? Hello—hello—hello! oh, dear! I'm cut off. Hello!"

Jacob had dropped the telephone and was blubbering into his elbow like the overgrown cub he always was where his child was concerned.

Even Mr. Chivot's eyes looked like marbles with dew on them, and his important Adam's apple went up and down between the ropes.

But he had the omnipresence of mind to take up the telephone and speak to the distracted Muriel. Before he could make her understand who he was, she stormed at him:

"Get off the wire! I'm talking! . . . Please—go away! . . . Oh, it's you! What's the matter with my father? Where is he? Why doesn't he speak to me?"

"He—he is crying," said Mr. Chivot. It was one of the few blunt and undiplomatic statements he had ever made. He was punished instantly; for Muriel set up a howl. Between the two of them, poor Chivot!

Jacob speedily shamed himself into self-control, nodded Chivot out of the room, and began with fine recovery to berate Muriel for giving him and her mother such a scare.

"Well, I like that!" she answered, with the gift of anger she had inherited. "I suppose you're disappointed because I got away from those awful men."

This brought Jacob to terms at once. He poured out love-speeches like a suppliant till he had her pacified.

Then he asked her to go home, and promised that he would join her there as soon as he could collect her mother. Muriel refused to go home, and indicated that she was a fugitive from publicity:—"wanted" by the reporters. Jacob knew that no wealth could bribe that army. He told her to put on a veil and take a taxicab to one of the up-river piers, whence he would take her off to the yacht.

Then he waved aside a dozen important problems, wedged through the tackling reporters, motored back to his launch, and went out to his yacht, flaunting a gleeful handkerchief to the forlorn woman at the rail, and shouting across the high-shouldered waves at the slashing prow:

"It's all right, mother. It's all right. The baby is safe. It's all right."

CHAPTER XLII

WORTHING woke with a start. He had forgotten to set his alarm-clock, but a kind of mental alarm-clock shocked him awake. He "felt two natures struggling within him." One whispered, "Stay in bed!" the other thundered, "Get up and get to work."

He soused his weary frame in a cold tub, then pushed it into his clothes and trundled it to Eccleston's private hospital. Muriel was not there, of course, and Worthing proceeded to prepare himself to assist in the rites of operation in the priestly robes of the surgeon.

Eccleston was all agog over the morning papers, but he had not told Happy of Muriel's adventure. The boy had excitement enough to occupy him.

Worthing explained to Happy that Muriel was too busy to come. The boy tried to smother back his overpowering disappointment, but he failed. He sighed:

"And I t'ought she was one dame what a guy could bank on her woid. But I guess all skoits is alike. Lemme hold your hand, Doc. Us men has gotta stick togedder."

He gripped Worthing's triply sterilized fingers and the anesthetist was about to put the candle-snuffer over his face, when there was a tap on the door and Dr. Worthing was called out to the waiting-room, where a densely veiled woman stood.

Before she lifted the veil Worthing gasped: "Muriel! Miss Schuyler!"

A hand shot out to his, and a muffled whisper came

from the clouds: "Hush! I'm in disguise." She explained her fear of the police and the press, and her plan of flight to her father's yacht.

"Then why did you risk coming here?"

"Because I promised to hold Happy's hand, and I—I had to see you and tell you how wonderful you were, and how grateful I am."

"Grateful—for what?"

"If it hadn't been for you I should never have been saved. If you hadn't followed those beasts so closely and turned them off their track and delayed them, they would have got away with me entirely."

"Do you think that?" he sighed, ecstatically.

"I know it. I could hear the wretches talk, couldn't I? They didn't gag my ears. And I heard you call to me. That saved me from dying of despair!"

"Muriel!" he cried, catching her hand again.

She chuckled. "I've forgotten your first name, I'm afraid. I only heard it once. It's Clinton, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"It's a rather cold name, isn't it? It's one of those first names made over out of a last name."

"Call me anything you like."

"I'll have to think up something."

A stern-faced nurse appeared like a gorgon to ruin the tête-à-tête with the grim message, "The surgeons are waiting."

"Good heavens! and I haven't seen Happy."

"Better not tell him about your adventure."

He led her into Happy's room, where the boy lay waxen white, all swaddled and bound for the altar knives. He rolled to his side and shouted:

"Dere she is! Dere's me best goil! Dese guys was sayin' you was too busy to come, but I never mistrusted you."

It was a gallant and chivalrous lie.

Muriel had been preparing an elaborate speech of *bon*

voyage to Happy on his cruise, but the anesthetist interposed:

"I'm sorry, but Dr. Eccleston is very busy this morning."

"All right, all right!" said Happy, severely, then turned his wistful face to Muriel: "Don't you care, sweetheart. Dese stoigeons is just achin' to git deir hands on me. Doc Woithin's tellin' me dey's goin' to toin me into such a woik of art dat dey'll be usin' me in de movies. We'll have time enough to talk after I come t'rough de sausage-machine. Good-by and much ubbliged."

Muriel bent down and kissed him and left a hasty tear of hers upon his face. He clenched his rough little talons about her soft fingers and nodded to the anesthetist:

"Get busy, Doc, and douse me glim."

Muriel tried not to shiver as the cone was pressed over his face. Happy wriggled out from under it at once for a last comment:

"Say, dis perfumery remines me of de Gas-house Districk where I foist met you. Rememmer? Goo'by!"

Then he accepted the cone and obeyed the murmurous command to "breathe in deeply." The little bellows of his scrawny chest rose and fell in an impatient eagerness as he gulped down the mystic vapor of annihilation.

Muriel breathed with him and kept sending messages of courage through her fingers into his. He answered clasp for clasp with a slow diminuendo of power, till at length his hand lay inert in hers and he was at peace.

It was she that was filled with dread of the sharp instruments, and terrified with wondering where his soul was hovering while its tenement was invaded and repaired. They wheeled his body out in the little white tumbril, followed by the priests in their robes. Dr. Worthing dared not shake hands even with her, but he lingered to beg her not to wait.

"It may be a long time, and it will seem much longer."

"But I must know what happens," she pleaded. "I must be here when he comes back—if he does."

"But he will suffer a good deal, you know, and he will think he suffers more than he does."

"If he can stand it, I ought to be able to," she answered.

He yielded to her lovable stubbornness and left her.

She spent the interval upon a rack of torture. She paced the floor of the waiting-room, reading books and magazines and watching the hands of the clock; she felt in her own flesh the steels that were searching Happy's body.

She had not seen the morning papers, and had not dreamed that she would be starred in them as the headliner of the day. She came across a copy of one of them, and the sight of her name in big type shocked Happy from her thoughts for a time. She had no relish for the notoriety. She took alarm anew at the thought of finding herself co-starred in to-morrow's papers with Perry Merithew. She imagined an army of reporters hunting for her; she imagined herself the captive of the police. A girlish desire to hide threw her into a panic.

The return of the somber procession with the reconstructed shell of Happy Hanigan drove herself out of her thoughts, and she took the boy's limp hand again and held it while the soul resumed the body and strength flowed back into the fingers. Only now he was returning into pain and nausea and cruelly enforced repose.

Worthing tried to assure her that the distressful outcries were the mere babblings of delirium, but she could not make any comforting distinction between a soul that only thought it was hurt and a soul that knew it was hurt.

She blamed herself now for bringing these anguishes upon the boy, and she doubted the assurances that the operation was a brilliant success. She was more afraid now of the reality of recovered life than of the occult terrors of anesthesia. She had no bravery to lend the boy, and wept till he recovered wisdom enough to under-

stand and courage enough to pretend that he was not suffering at all.

He brought his old-time grin into play and laughed hollowly: "It was de gas was hollerin', not me. I'm feelin' so fine I t'ink I'll take a ride if you got your ottermobile handy."

Everybody collaborated with Happy to deceive the nerve-shattered girl, and she was evicted from the room with enough illusions to sustain her.

Dr. Worthing insisted on riding with her to the dock where the launch from the yacht was waiting. She invited him to take dinner there with her, and he needed no urging.

He turned away, once more the victim of hope.

When Muriel ran up the ladder to the deck of the yacht, she hugged and kissed her mother, her father, and the maids and shook hands with the servants and the crew.

Then she settled down to rhapsodize the long epic of her adventure before an audience that copied the luxurious terror of children hearing a beautiful ogre story.

Mrs. Schuyler wept splendidly, and Jacob stormed and shuddered and swore that she should never be out of their sight again. Muriel said she never wanted to be. One says such things at such times.

As Muriel described her cruise through midnight New York, they listened as it were with a lilt, and a vivid sense of speed and danger. When she reached the point of her rescue, and told how she stepped out of the stolen limousine, they were jigging with excitement. But when she finished with a flourish: "And who do you suppose it was that rescued me? You'll never guess! Mr. Perry Merithew!" their eagerness stopped like a car whose front axle breaks. It was sickening. Perry Merithew's instinct had been true. The very mention of his name sobered the Schuylers.

"Oh no!" Mrs. Schuyler groaned.

"Agh!" Jacob snarled, and walked out on deck to emit a few necessary curses too strong for the family circle. He came back speechless, but full of wrath.

With the cantankerousness of human nature, Muriel, who had not yet forgiven Perry Merithew for rescuing her, felt the injustice of her parents' ingratitude, and rushed to his defense.

"Oh, he was perfectly charming about it. He told me that we must keep out of sight of the reporters. He protected me in every way."

"It was the least he could have done!" Jacob sneered.

When people we like do the right thing it is glorious; when people we dislike do their best it is disgusting, for they are spiking our guns.

Muriel did not waste her time heroizing Perry Merithew before that hostile audience, but its injustice set her heart toward mercy for him. To appease her father and mother, she minimized the rôle he played and maximized the share of Dr. Worthing.

This seemed to please them no better. If she could have known what Winnie Nicolls tried to do, his name would have pleased her mother. But Dr. Worthing meant nothing to Mrs. Schuyler. To Jacob he meant the young man who aided and abetted Muriel's slumming insanity. Also he meant the uneasiness a father feels at finding the male and romantic element cropping up increasingly in his daughter's chronicles.

He was sinking into a state of hopeless gloom when Muriel lifted him to the clouds with an explosion of undreamed intelligence:

"Daddy, I can't face the music. I want to go to Europe for a long while. I'm afraid of the police, and I can't stand this sort of thing."

She caught up the sheaf of morning papers and spread them out. On all of them her name in huge type outflaunted the day's murderers, embezzlers, politicians, and victims of accident.

In other times and places the unmarried girl was guarded zealously from the public eye and the public gossip. In these days her name may suddenly be found on a million newspapers. She may find herself the helpless object of international blazonry.

Muriel had done no wrong. She had suffered wrong. Yet she must be punished like a criminal. She must be besieged and questioned by the police, interpreted and misrepresented by the reporters, offered up as a subject for cynical guesswork, stood on a high pillory with the fierce yellow light of journalism beating on her.

A modest, well-bred maiden on an errand of mercy, Muriel had fallen among a pack of wolves. Escaped from them, she was to be forced to play Lady Godiva with a brass band ahead and nobody staying within-doors.

The publicity was outrageous enough in any case, but Jacob revolted at the thought of seeing his daughter's name bracketed in the newspapers with Perry Merithew's. Perry Merithew was the main trouble, and the only ray of light in the whole miserable business was Muriel's willingness to escape. Nowadays parents with inconvenient daughters do not slam them into convents for refuge; they send them to Europe.

Jacob was rejoiced. He ventured a compliment—a kind of back-handed compliment: "Muriel, my child, it's the first sensible idea I've heard from you for weeks. I congratulate you."

Muriel winked at her mother. They always shared the amusement or the anxiety or the anger Jacob occasioned.

Jacob bustled on: "If you go abroad on one of the steamers, you would be at the mercy of everybody. Those liners are about as private as Broadway. We'll take the yacht. I've a few things to attend to, and I'll be ready."

"I've a few things to attend to myself," said Muriel.

"Clothes, of course," Jacob growled, with the ancient

masculine despair at woman's inability to undertake any enterprise without refitting.

"No, I've got clothes enough."

Jacob pretended to swoon. "I've lived to hear a woman say that! Or am I having hallucinations?"

Muriel and her mother exchanged wireless signals again.

Muriel went on. "You can telephone home to have the trunks packed and smuggled aboard. But I've got to have a heart-to-heart talk with that darling of a Dr. Worthing; I've got to see that the poor Balinsky girl doesn't get deported, and I've got to pay a proper respect to poor Mr. Merithew."

"Let Chivot attend to it all."

"Yes, I will! He'll do as well as he did in getting back the Angelillo boy. Is there any word from him, I wonder?"

They had all been too much absorbed in the narrative of Muriel's disappearance to consider any other news. She scanned the columns eagerly, and there on an inner page was a picture of little Filippo with a story of his return to his family, a picture of him as he came home, a long account of his adventures, the cruelties he had endured, and the aid he had given the police in tracing the wretches who had stolen him.

Muriel, remembering the long anguishes of the boy's people, could imagine the festival they held over his recovery. She rejoiced to tears and bent her head on the newspaper, and wept. Her parents sorrowed comfortably over her comfortable tears, and they were not angry when she raised her head to say:

"Aren't you glad I disobeyed you? You see, it's the duty of children to disobey their parents now and then, isn't it?"

They did not attempt to answer that riddle, nor the next one she posed.

"Another thing: if it hadn't been for Perry Merithew the boy might never have come home. If it hadn't been

for Perry Merithew I might never have come home. How can he be bad when he does so much good that good people might have done and didn't?"

Jacob was so bewildered by this that he took refuge in a desk-clearing evasion: "I don't have to decide who's good and who's bad. I'm not God, thank God!"

Muriel and her mother gasped at the sacrilege and looked up to see if a thunderbolt were not crashing through the awning. But none came.

"Anyway," said Muriel, "we've all got to be polite to Mr. Merithew."

"No," said Jacob, "I don't have to judge him, but neither do I have to entertain him."

"You get him mad and he'll tell on me," Muriel threatened. This argument went home.

Jacob surrendered. "All right. Give him a meal and get rid of him."

Mrs. Schuyler suggested: "You might have him and your doctor for dinner to-night, and finish them both off at once."

Muriel looked canny. "Have both my beaux here at the same time? Not much!"

Jacob snorted: "Don't—don't talk about those men sentimentally, or I'll throw them both overboard."

Muriel laughed like a child at a circus over her power to excite such floundering wrath with such a gentle prod. "All righty, Jacob," she said. "Keep your flannels on!"

"The impudence of children nowadays is appalling," Jacob groaned. "Disobedience isn't enough—they've got to add insult to indifference."

Muriel's answer was to lift his arm, place it around her waist, seat herself on the arm of his chair, and twist his resisting neck till she could make a face directly in his face, then kiss him on the tip of his nose.

It was the supreme impertinence with which she always crowned her presumptions, and it always made him so

ferociously ridiculous that he always surrendered with the angry laughter of a boy whose ribs are tickled.

So long as a family is not devoid of such mischievous tenderness, it is held together by an elastic band that will yield enough to keep from breaking. With Jacob restored to the ranks, Muriel and her mother arranged to invite Merithew to tea in the afternoon, and Worthing to dinner in the evening. The notes were written and sent ashore to be delivered with all stealth. At midnight the yacht was to put out to sea.

CHAPTER XLIII

PERRY MERITHEW had not had many secrets whose publication would have been to his credit. Life took him no more seriously than he took life. A kind of joke was played on him now in the fact that the most creditable thing about the most creditable feat he ever achieved was the fact that he recognized the importance of keeping it a secret. That same kind of sarcasm hounded him to his death.

Perry was chucklingly congratulating himself on the double victory over police and press when his telephone rang. He rashly answered it himself—a thing he could rarely afford to do. His non-committal "Well?" evoked a strident:

"That you, Perry boy?"

"Oh—er—ah—yes. How are you, Pet?"

"Punk, thanks. Just able to sit up and eat a bite. I say, old dear, run down to lunch with me at the Vanderbilt. I'm buying."

"Thanks, but I've—"

"Another engagement? Break it!"

"Can't."

"Better come." This was in a darker tone with a trace of threat.

"Sorry, but—"

Her loud voice went lower. "It's about the mysterious rescuer of Muriel Sch—"

"I'll come!" he hastened to say. The voice grew loud again.

"Bully! The Della Robbia room, at one."

"I'll be there, thank you, damn you!"

He heard the odious racket of her laughter. He slammed the receiver on the hook and cursed her fervently.

He longed the more to hear from Muriel.

He delayed his departure till the last moment, and still no word from her. Fearing that she would telephone in his absence, he did what he almost never did—left word with his man where he was to be.

He found Pet waiting, and they descended the steps to the cellar *de luxe*, where Pet had reserved a table in the deepest nook. When the head waiter offered Perry the card, Pet took it from him.

"It's my lunch, Umberto. Two of my cocktails. You remember? And don't put in that sweet gin again, or you'll hear from me."

Without consulting Perry she ran through the order. When the head waiter had sent the waiters flying, and taken himself off, Perry groaned:

"I can't eat all that stuff. I just had breakfast."

"But they say the way to a man's heart is *via* his tum. And I'm on my way."

"How much and what for?"

"Perry darling, when you're so very nice I know you mean to refuse. You're one of those who put sugar on the quinine and quinine on the sugar. But this is business. I've got something to sell that you want to buy."

"Yes?"

"Silence."

"That seems to be your principal stock in trade lately. What do you think you know now?"

"I know who saved Muriel Schuyler."

"Really? Tell me! It seems to be quite a mystery. Why don't you notify the police or the papers?"

"I thought I'd better ask your permission first. Of course I recognized your fine Italian hand. You knew where she was to be taken. You started out to find her."

"So did Winnie Nicolls, and perhaps he—"

"Oh no, he didn't! I asked him, and he nearly wept when he said it wasn't his luck."

"Well?"

"Anybody but you would have swaggered all over the place."

"Why not me?"

"Because you have your own secrets with little Muriel. Money passes between you at dances; you know where she is kidnapped; you go get her, but you don't dare let anybody know it."

"And why not?"

"Because, sweet child of my soul—because you are one of those darling devils who compromise whatever you touch. Anybody who shakes hands with you smells of brimstone for a week."

"And yet you lunch with me?"

"Me? Ha! People couldn't say anything about me half as bad as they've already said. I've had a severe attack of gossipitis, and recovered, and now I'm immune. I can even be seen alone in public with you, Perry darling, and not suffer."

"But how about me?" he smiled. "Won't I suffer from being seen with you? There are degrees of deviltry among us devils."

"Don't be humorous, Perry. As I was saying, everybody that is ever going to stop speaking to me has stopped long ago. The rest of them know that I'm on the square, and—"

"I beg your pardon. I missed that last."

"Even Mrs. Nicolls has asked me up to her blow-out at Newport, and I'm going."

"Don't let me detain you."

"I'm traveling on your money."

"Whew! What's the fare?"

"Five hundred dollars."

"Make it New Zealand, and I'll pay it—one way."

"Are you as afraid of me as all that?"

"I'm not in the least afraid of you."

"You don't mind my telling the papers, then, that you rescued Muriel Schuyler from the gunmen?"

"Not at all. Only be sure to address it to the comic supplements. The news editor might ask you where you got such a crazy idea and what evidence you based it on."

Pet was not shaken at all in her belief, but she was a trifle shaken in her confidence. She assumed a pleading tone; a crucial mistake in her business:

"Now, Perry, don't try to bluff your grandmother. You got Muriel out of the scrape, and you're trying not to get her into another. It's mighty white of you. All I want is for you to be sweet enough to lend me the money to buy me a costume for Mrs. Nicolls' *Au Fond de la Mer*. You ought to help me, because if I can get Winnie it takes out of your way a dangerous rival for Muriel's attention."

This last was a tactical error. It touched Perry's chivalry to the core, because it put an evil significance upon his interest in Muriel.

"Look here, Pet. Muriel Schuyler is the decentest young woman I've ever met. And I've only met her once or twice. It's simply unspeakable for you to waste your ghastly imagination on her character."

"She stands for you, Perry. One rotten apple in a barrel, you know. You're mighty anxious to protect her from me, but, by the Lord! you've got to pay for protection."

"Plain blackmail, eh?"

"Perry, if you use that word again I'll horsewhip you. I swear I will."

He smiled, unterrified. "What word do you prefer, Angel-face?"

"I'm hard up and I want to borrow some money. I offer to do you a favor and ask you to do me one—that's all."

"Borrow, eh? But borrowing implies returning."

"I'll return it—when I marry Winnie Nicolls."

"That 'll be the day after Never. When old Mrs. Nicolls invites you to her party that doesn't mean for life. She isn't giving her Winnie away as a souvenir, you know. If you're offering me this as an investment, Pet—ump-umm!"

She was in such a disarray of anger, anxiety, helplessness, desperation, that he was tempted to slip her one of his thousand-dollar bills as a charity. He had such impulses, and the more foolish they were the more they fascinated him.

He was saved from the extravagance by a page who came to his table with the word that he was "wanted on the 'phone by a lady."

Perry was sure that it was Muriel, and left in such haste that he carried his napkin half-way through the dining-room before he realized it and flung it on the tray of an omnibus. He closed the door of the telephone-booth as gingerly as if it were a boudoir, and, gathering his features into a gorgeous smile, cooed into the receiver his most honeyfied "Hello."

It was not Muriel that answered him, but a voice that asked, "Is that choo, Mist' Murryt'ew?"

"A new maid or somebody speaking for her," he thought, and answered "Yes."

"Say, listen! I'm talkin' from Noo Joisey."

"New Jersey! How on earth did you get there?"

"I got here under the oith. And it was some trip, take it from me. Well—say, listen!"

"Who are you, anyway?"

"Aw, you know me."

"No doubt, but I don't place you at the moment."

"Say, listen! I don't dast give me name. Them telephone molls has ears could hear a mile. I'm the little lady you're dancin' with last night and tips you off to how you was to save a soitain pawty was bein' kidnapped. Get me?"

"Oh yes, of course. How do you do?"

"I'm grand, I don't think. I'm yours for life for namin' no names in the papers. I been readin' 'em. You can get the N'York paper 'way over here in Joisey City. But they tell me me man is collared."

"Say that in English, please."

"Say, listen! Remember me tellin' you me husband was leadin' the gang was doin' the job?"

"Yes."

"Well, the flatties nailed um."

"Once more, if you don't mind."

"Aw! he was urrested."

"Oh, that's too bad! I am sorry."

"I'm not. If he hadn' 'a' went to jail, I'd 'a' went to the morgue. Honest. I beat it just in time. It was a case of the quick or the dead with me, all right, all right."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," said Perry, impatiently patient. "But I'm glad to hear that you're safe."

"Oh yes, I'm safe from me husband; but that don't get me nothin' to eat, you know. If I gotta croak from starvin' I'd rather it was him got me. It would be less trouble for me, and more fun for him. Well, 'z I 's sayin', seems to me like it was kind of up to you and that soitain pawty we spoke of to look after me and see I don't do a fade-away from gettin' out the habit of eatin'. Do you see what I mean?"

"Well—yes, I rather fancy I do."

"And what you fancy you're goin' to do about it?"

"I'll have to think it over."

"While I eat me finger-nails and drink the public air? Not on your sweet life. I done you a good toin and you got a right to slip me some coin and slip it quick."

"How much of a slip would you need?"

Ida hoped to get fifty dollars, so she said, "A hundred dollars 'll hold me."

"All right," said Perry.

"For a while," Ida hastily amended.

Perry shook his head. The sliding scale of the blackmailer's art was being pushed along. But he took down Ida's assumed name and her temporary address, and vowed that he would remit that afternoon.

He felt that Ida had at least deserved as much as she got. But what had Pet Bettany done to collect wages on? He went back to her with anger and stubbornness in his heart. When Pet reiterated her demand, he did not spare her feelings. Most bluntly he refused her.

When she threatened to appeal to Muriel again he laughed. "If you learn where she is let me know, will you? I can't find a trace of her."

Pet snapped: "All right for you, Perry mine. I'll get you yet."

Then they dismissed the subject, and finished the lunch in bartering small talk and scandal with such amiability that the waiter never suspected that they had quarreled.

Pet insisted on paying the bill, and they parted at the taxicab in apparently the friendliest spirit. He went home to find Muriel's invitation to tea on the yacht, and his heart rejoiced.

But in Pet's heart was rage. She spent much time and some money in calling up Muriel, only to find out that she had vanished.

Pet did not go to Newport. She did not gleam at Mrs. Nicolls' submarine fête. She wept like a little fiend deprived of a famous wish. She hated her mother for being what she called poor. She hated Muriel Schuyler for being inaccessible. She hated Perry Merithew for resisting her attack. She hated Perry almost as much as she hated Muriel.

But she did not inform the newspapers of Perry's rescue, because once more her bolt would be shot. Instead, she promised herself a sufficient squaring of accounts the moment the chance arose.

CHAPTER XLIV

MURIEL dared not go ashore. Her father warned her that the police would be seeking her, and that if she were found she would be held as a witness under heavy bond. He was afraid to go ashore himself; he sent a man to telephone Mr. Chivot to come aboard. And he dropped down the Bay with the yacht and kept steam up.

Chivot came, and was loaded with errands of the greatest complexity, which he would be sure to remember marvelously and accomplish without the least mistake.

Muriel commissioned him to collect from the police the money recovered from the kidnappers of the little Angelillo boy, and to devote it to paying the expenses of Happy Hanigan's operation and recovery. Also she insisted that Mr. Chivot should take up the rescue of the Balinsky family from deportation, and carry it to the President of the United States if necessary.

Mr. Chivot protested that the President was not easy to reach, and that letters of this sort would be simply referred back to the department concerned.

"If he could only be made to understand, he would interfere, I know," Muriel insisted.

Mr. Chivot attempted a sarcasm. "You'd better write him all about it yourself."

To his dismay, Muriel leaped at the idea. "I will!" she cried, like the allegory of Chicago. "How do I address him: Your Royal Highness? or Your Serene High Mightiness, or Your Gracious Majesty, or how?"

Mr. Chivot groaned: "You can say 'Your Excellency,'

if you want to; but since your father voted against him you might begin, 'Dear Mr. President.'"

"Is that all?" she gasped. "Why, that's the way you'd address anybody!"

Mr. Chivot, who knew everything, including his own equality with anybody on earth, explained: "We're like France, where every man is monsieur and every woman madame or mademoiselle."

After a moment of disappointment at the tameness of it, Muriel felt suddenly a little pang of pride. She laughed. "It's rather nice to live in a country where we're all so equal, isn't it?"

She had previously regretted the absence of the pomp and circumstance of foreign peerage. Now she felt that it was even more gorgeous to have the glory distributed than to have it restricted to a few coronets and garters and a few yards of black-tailed white ermine. The sunlight has gilt enough for every one.

She worked a long while on her letter, tearing up an unconscionable amount of stationery with groans of disgust, violently punishing the paper as if it were to blame. At last she threw revision to the winds and wrote it all in one dash, and achieved at least the first essence of a good letter—spontaneity. This is what she showed her father:

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,—I beg a thousand pardons for intruding on so busy a person as Your Excellency must be, especially as you don't like my father's principles and he didn't vote for you. But I'll make him next time, if you can see your way clear to doing me a terribly important favor. And this isn't bribery, either.

Everybody knows that you are a very just man. I am sure that you will take pleasure in seeing justice done to an awfully pitiful case. I'll tell it as briefly as I can.

You see, sir, a poor Russian Jew named Michal Balinsky came over here to escape from the Black Hundreds. He worked and starved till he saved money to bring over his wife and

daughter. They arrived and passed safely through Ellis Island. But nearly a year later the daughter broke down with nervous prostration. The doctors—all except a very brilliant young physician named Clinton Worthing—said that she was insane and ordered her deported. This meant that the mother would have to go back with her for ever. And it was dangerous for them in Russia. And the poor father would be all alone here. He could not go with them, because it would have meant death to him, as it means starvation to the only two he has on earth. It is simply too cruel for words, and I hope—I think I know—that you will do everything in your power to prevent this cruel, awful, inhuman, un-American crime against a poor little, harmless, pathetic family. They have suffered enough without this Government picking on them. They fled from Russia because it was too cruel for them. You don't want it said that this country is crueler than Russia, do you?

The newspapers are cruel enough, as you know all too well. Through no fault of mine I've got to go to Europe on account of them. A poor President can't get away, can you? I want to leave the case of the Balinsky family at your feet.

This letter is not in proper form for an appeal, but please accept it as a petition thrown into your carriage. And please, oh, please, send word to your Secretary of Labor that he must under no circumstances refuse the appeal when it comes before him—if it is not there already.

Dr. Clinton Worthing, an eminent young surgeon of the Bellevue staff, will testify that the girl is not permanently insane, and he guarantees to cure her if he is allowed to. And my father and I will guarantee that she does not become a burden on the Government. So I hope and pray that you will stretch out your powerful hand and shelter these poor little innocent sheep from slaughter.

With no end of thanks in advance, I beg you to believe me, dear Mr. President,

Most gratefully and respectfully yours,

MURIEL SCHUYLER.

Jacob read the letter through and laughed tenderly over it.

"What do you think of it?" Muriel asked, anxiously.

"It's not exactly what Chivot would have written," Jacob smiled.

"But will the President be offended?"

"He has daughters," said Jacob, and reached up and caught her cheeks in his palms and dragged her head down within kissing reach.

She seated herself on the arm of his chair with her dense copper hair shadowing the sparse platinum of his, and began to wheedle. "Daddy, I want you to give me a lot of money to spend on poor people. Won't you?"

"What do you call a lot?"

"I don't know. Sometimes a very little will save some awfully nice person from a terrible, terrible tragedy. Sometimes it takes more."

"I give a lot to the organized charities, and so does your mother."

"I know, and it does no end of good; but I'd like some that I can call my very own. And I want you to let me engage Dr. Worthing on a salary to go round as a kind of Good Samaritan looking for people that need help."

"For the Lord's sake!"

"He's a wonderful physician, and he knows heaps about frauds and swindles, and he wouldn't waste the money."

"Nonsense, my child!"

"Then I don't go to Europe. I'll stay here and face the music and drag you all into the papers."

This pistol at his head brought his hands up again, and he agreed to talk it over with Dr. Worthing at dinner.

And now the launch came beetling over the water, bearing the chivalrous Mr. Merithew to tea.

Like others of their group, the Schuylers could be either miserly or spendthrift of either money or hospitality. They resolved that Perry Merithew had earned the best the house could afford.

As he came up the side of the yacht his hand was

seized in both the full, fat hands of Jacob, who exclaimed: "My boy, I can never tell you how grateful I am to you for taking my poor little girl from those hounds. Frankly, I hadn't expected such heroism from you. The tact you displayed did not surprise me, but the heroism—God bless you for that."

Perry stammered, and was as awkward as a baseball hero acknowledging the plaudits of the bleachers. Next he passed into the almost hysterical gratitude of Mrs. Schuyler. And from her into the boyishly awkward acknowledgments of Muriel.

Tea was served on deck with the best service, but Perry did not take tea. Jacob joined him in a substitute. Something just as bad.

Muriel made no stint of her praise. She was neither tired nor sleepy now, and she was very, very beautiful in her yachting white, with all New York and Brooklyn and the Bay in a cyclorama round about.

Perry lost his head completely. She seemed so admirable and so nobly desirable that he began to think her not unattainable. He was somewhat older, of course, but he felt as young as he ever had felt, and he permitted his fancy to play upon her, though her mother kept alluding to his wife, his charming wife. Still, wives are not the obstacles nowadays they once were.

Perry would have been willing to linger there for the rest of his existence. Indeed, Jacob had to get rid of him at last by saying that the launch was going ashore to bring out a dinner guest. He took the hint and made his adieux, covered with phrases of praise and thanks that fairly hung his neck with Hawaiian flower ropes. Then Muriel and her family made haste to change to the dinner uniform.

When Perry stepped ashore he found a young man waiting whom he did not know. Nor did the young man know him. They looked at each other so jealously that their very eyes sparred.

Dr. Worthing came aboard in a state of acute embarrassment. He was angry at his ignorance. It was his first yacht. But he walked as large as if he owned it.

Muriel met him at the top of the steps, and he clung to her hand as if she were pulling him out of drowning waters. He frightened her pleasantly by the greediness of his clutch, and she hastened to pass him on to her parents.

When they had given him warm hand-clasps and regarded him with the fascinated horror parents feel for young men interested in their young daughters, Muriel said:

"Speak your piece now, Susan."

Mrs. Schuyler, who was Susan, glared at Muriel, then began an oration of gratitude for Worthing's efforts to rescue Muriel. This robbed the taciturn youth of whatever words he might have had in his possession. He made a few gestures of deprecation, swallowed hard, smiled miserably, felt an idiot.

When dinner was fairly in progress, Muriel signaled Jacob to attack the job she had imposed on him.

"My daughter is called abroad rather unexpectedly, Dr. Worthing, and she has to leave a number of things undone. She insisted that I ought to—that is, I'm very glad to—er—I was wondering if you cared to accept a—er—a kind of a—sort of a—roving commission."

Dr. Worthing was bewildered. "I don't believe I quite understand."

"That's strange," Muriel exclaimed, with a withering glance at her father, "when he explained it so clearly and fully."

Then she outlined her plan to him as she had outlined it to her father, only with every imaginable difference of manner. Now she was not a spoiled child wheedling further exactions from a father who protested everything on general principles, but she was a coquette practising her wiles on a man.

They can't help it, at that age—perhaps not at any age; but a spectator at too great a distance to be an auditor would never have imagined that the young woman was asking the young man to accept a salary for acting as her benevolent agent in the slums.

That was one trouble. She fascinated Worthing so much that all he could think of was how lovable she was, how intolerable her absence would be, and how impossible it was that he should think of taking her wages when he wanted her heart. His mind kept telling him, "If you take a job as her father's employee, you cut yourself off from her hand for ever." There are occasions when love works severance more than hostility.

He refused with much firmness and as much expression of polite regret as he could manage.

Muriel sank back disheartened and discouraged. She was not keen enough to realize the compliment he paid her. She felt herself rebuffed.

Her mother took up the neglected business of talk, and talked about health.

Mrs. Schuyler and Jacob had reached the age when their souls were fighting for their bodies against increasing dispossess proceedings, that must eventually oust them from their tenements. Their interest in their own engines was tremendous. They kept Dr. Worthing talking about the newest theories and practices.

Mrs. Schuyler was for ever changing physicians; the next doctor was always Æsculapius himself; the preceding doctor was always a mountebank or a pantaloon. She was soon convinced that Dr. Worthing could prescribe for her the very elixir of life. She overwhelmed him when the roast came in with a quiet remark:

"Jacob dear, it strikes me that it would be a splendid idea to ask Dr. Worthing to come along with us as our family physician."

"But Kenneman is already engaged," said Jacob. "He comes aboard to-night."

"Ah, Kenneman!" groaned Mrs. Schuyler. "He doesn't know anything. He's an old fool!"

"Well," said Jacob, "it might be arranged. If Dr. Worthing is free."

Dr. Worthing could not speak. Suddenly the steward had set down upon the table not a huge roast on a silver charger, but a wonderland—a cloudy vision of towers and palaces of Alps and Fontainebleaux, with Thames and Rhine like ribbons winding from Killarney to Como. He saw himself with Muriel in oceanic moon-nights and Norwegian midnight sunrises. He saw her at his elbow in motor-cars and gondolas. He visited with her Chamounix and Montmarte, the Lido and the Lichtentaler Allée —all the places he had read about and had traveled when he studied medicine abroad.

The steward had placed upon the board a vast platter of romance, and Jacob was carving him a slice of the rare.

Muriel, too, must have seen such a vision, for she turned pale, then red, then pale again. Her nostrils were tense and her hands uneasy of control.

Mrs. Schuyler, glancing at Dr. Worthing, saw the tidal wave of blood that overswept his face and his very hands. She saw his gaze leap Murielwards. She turned her eyes on Muriel and saw that she was breathing hard.

The old lady's training as a duenna had taught her to recognize such crises in the young. She had been young herself once. Her shrewd soul cried: "Oho!" and, "This will never do!"

Without delaying she sighed: "Still, I suppose it's impossible. We'll have to get along with Kenneman this voyage. Perhaps Dr. Worthing would come with us next time."

Dr. Worthing knew that Next Time is the alias of Not at All. His courage wrung from his torture a dismal smile, and he bowed his head. When he looked up the cloudy world had vanished and only a haunch of beef

was on the table, and Jacob was carving it with a knife of steel, and carving it thin.

The rest of the dinner was a funeral feast to him and Muriel. The very hint of the voyage they might have had somehow sufficed to carry their hearts almost as far forward together as if they had actually taken it. There was little speech between them except the conversation of eyes, yet they felt already in a sense betrothed after a long wooing.

Mrs. Schuyler understood, and was sorry for them both, but she had no intention of allowing the impulsive Muriel to stray any farther into these slumming expeditions. A love-affair with a penniless young physician would be a ludicrous calamity, and the sooner it was prevented the better.

She hardly allowed Worthing to finish his cigar before she arranged with the sailing-master to appear and say that it was time to send off the launch for Dr. Kenneman, and was anybody going ashore?

Worthing accepted the congé, and rose with an ill-suppressed sigh, said his good-nights to the elder Schuylers, and put out his hand to Muriel.

"I'll go to the ladder with you," she said; and Mrs. Schuyler made no objection, feeling that frustration would only enhance their emotion.

"Put a scarf about you, dear," she said. "There's a heavy fog outside."

And so there was, the deck and stanchions dripping, the lights all haloed, and the air a palpable shimmer in whose fleece everything was speedily smothered.

"It's a bit thick, isn't it?" said Muriel to the sailor who guided them to the gangway.

"It is that, Miss. We look like a triplet of 'ysters in a milk stoo."

The distance to the side of the boat where the launch clung in a mystery of sheen and shadow was hatefully

short. The sailor held his glimmering lantern close to the platform of the little stairway set sidewise like the stoops in Batavia Street. Perhaps it reminded Muriel of that little avenue of her entrance into the realm of empty pockets, for she said:

"Watch my poor for me till I come back, won't you?"

"Yes," said Worthing, and put unimaginable fervor into the syllable.

"And write me often—and long—always in care of the Crédit Lyonnais. Will you remember?"

Another loaded "Yes."

"And I'll write you once in a while if I may."

"If you may!" he groaned. He was afraid of the emotion struggling at his throat. He caught her hand and wrung it, afraid to trust his voice so strangely eager to sob, instead of to say "Good-by."

He groped into the launch, steadied by the sailor's hand. When he looked up he could not see her, though the air was iridescent. But he heard her soft "Good-by," and answered it. Then the motor of the launch began its cynical "tut tut! tut tut!" and there was a sense of fishlike swerve and dash. She was gone.

All about was a sound of squawling fog-horns, of splashing ferry-boats, thumping tugs, and raucous voices as of contemptuous cloud-gods mocking the folly of the poor young man who let himself love the daughter of the ogre and the ogress in the castle above the clouds.

Muriel herself was lost in a fog, and little she knew how much bewilderment she was causing. Dr. Worthing's heart was not the only one she was leaving in disorder. Perry Merithew was dreaming of her, too. It was not poverty that stood in his way, for he had wealth, if he would only manage it.

But while Dr. Worthing was uncertain of his future and rashly planning to attach himself to impossible balloons of hope, Perry Merithew was troubled by the

very definite certainty of his past, and was resolving to cut it loose and let it sink.

He was even now on his way to cast Maryla Sokalska adrift.

Muriel, from the best part of her heart, had been moved to rescue Maryla from the slums into the realm of beauty at Dutilh's dressmaking shop. She had transplanted an orchid from a jungle to a conservatory, only to have it plucked and worn by its first ruthless admirer.

There are restless natures that, exhausting every vice in turn, come round at last to being good as a wild novelty worth trying. They degenerate, as it were, into virtue.

Perry Merithew was aweary of selfish and indecorous women. He would go at once to Maryla Sokalska and set her free—or at least return her to the shop where he got her and ask that she be credited to his account.

It pleased his humor to say to himself that he was doing an honorable thing. And, of course, he was, from one viewpoint. But how would poor Maryla view it? She was of a dark and Oriental blood that placed revenge high among its passions. She was of a warm and luxurious blood that loved slowly, but with deep, burning love, and hated in the same fashion. She had just grown used to her sin, and was comfortably ensconced in it as among silken cushions. Her answer to exile would be the opposite of Rosalind's. She would cry, "What's set free, but banished?"

Muriel did not know that Maryla owed to her the gaining of Merithew's interest, and Maryla would not know that she owed to Muriel the loss of it.

Like a kitten that has romped through a work-basket, Muriel had gone, dragging at her feet various skeins and intertangling them until by and by the thread of Perry Merithew's life was so knotted in with the others that it had to be snipped off short by the shears of fate.

CHAPTER XLV

THE latest commodity in Perry Merithew's serial seraglio was basking, like a sultana, on a moonlit window-seat—the ninth window-seat, counting vertically in an apartment on the upper extreme of Central Park West.

Maryla was coiled and extended, and contented as a cobra full of warm milk. On the knuckle-dimples of her soft clasped hands her softer chin reposed. Her hair poured down along her cheeks and about her shoulders like a thick syrup, giving the back of her head an ophidian flatness.

Perry used to say of women: "When you see how flat their heads are in the back, you can't blame them for anything. In fact, you ought never to blame them or try to tame them. Just enjoy them as they grow, or run away from them." That was Perry's opinion. He knew women only in a few phases, and knew those phases too well.

By thrusting her chin forward a little Maryla could look straight down the windowed precipice to the street. But she preferred to stare drowsily into the polite wilderness of Central Park, for when she looked down she was filled with terror lest she yield to those mysterious hands that press the shoulder-blades of people in high places with satanic temptation to step off.

Maryla's soul had yielded to such an urge, but her body was afraid of it. Her soul had stepped off the lofty if bleak promontory of the poor but honest, and ceased to be both at the same time. But she had felt no

crash of ruin as she had been warned she would if ever she "fell." The wings the tempter promised had indeed borne her up. She was afloat in the buoyant mid-air of the demi-monde.

Part of Maryla's mind was telling her how wicked she was to leave that noble crag of innocence for ever. Part of her mind was telling her how foolish she would have been not to.

She had lost the high privilege of being the virtuous daughter of the half-starved Sokalskis. Her poor father had helplessly rewarded and honored her obedience with unending toil at a sewing-machine, with harsh words, poor food, coarse clothes, and no diversions and no patience for the love of beauty and fine raiment and amorous exploration that youth finds necessary.

Perry Merithew had insulted her with luxuries, with flowers, jewels, plumes, fashionable gowns, courtship, excursions, and a servant.

He had left her to dine alone to-night, but she dined well upon chicken roasted by a black Virginienne, and upon sweet-potatoes grilled, and upon ice-cream imported from the corner. There is a sufficing companionship in good food pleasantly served. And now there was luxury in reclining at ease and watching the huge gilt moon dwindle and silver as it climbed. There was a kind of conversation in the amiable breeze lifting her hair as with a lover's fingers, and fluttering the silken tissue of her peignoir and the ruffles of her expensive linenwear.

She was so completely cozy that she blessed the name of her destroyer, and mused that if this it was to be ruined, how false were the pretenses of sanctity.

The late sewing-machinist could hardly believe that she was not dreaming. To make sure that she was awake she struck her palms on the rough stone of the window-sill and clutched in her fingers the string of imitation pearls Perry had given her. She ran the pearls through her fingers like a kind of infernal rosary.

The only flaw in her contentment was Perry's absence. He was away from her most of the time. At first she had been so glad of idleness after her youth-long labor, that she had never complained to him of his neglect. She had made an industry of telling over to herself the things she had escaped, and of appreciating the things she had gained, including the furniture, the rugs, the pictures. She did not know enough to know how tawdry they were.

But she had soon begun to miss Perry when he was away. She had learned his name by accident when it slipped from him, but it meant to her nothing of what it meant to other New-Yorkers. She had not dreamed that he was married. She supposed him rich, and he told her nothing of his financial worries or his other entanglements. She had not annoyed him with exactions as Aphra Shaler had done. She knew nothing of the brevity of such alliances, as Aphra Shaler did.

Last night Perry had taken her to the gaudy restaurant where the funny little red-headed woman sang. He had left Maryla and danced with that girl, and had sat at her table so absorbed in what he was being told, that Maryla felt herself in the way.

She had resolved never to be an encumbrance on the kind gentleman. So she slipped away and walked back to the nest he had established her in. If he wanted to see her he knew where he had put her. He had not sought her.

The day had gone by with its flock of hours, one after one. Perry had sent no word, no flowers, no box of candy. Maryla was rebuking herself for a hint of resentment. This was heinous ingratitude. Yet she was amazed at the new strength of loneliness that gnawed at her like a hunger.

She heard a motor-horn in the street, and put her head forward so eagerly that she felt herself slipping over the brink. She caught herself back in a panic of fright, and rolled away from the perilous sill.

It was not Perry's car. Recovering her composure, Maryla tried to take comfort from the landscape and the cushions and the woven cream of the curtains. She uncoiled and stretched and yawned with all her might and with thoroughness. She walked about the apartment, luxuriating in it. It was all Eden in four rooms and a bath. She rubbed a velvety portière against her cheek. She stroked the glossy upholstery of the best chair. She snapped the electric light on and off; it was a new toy. She patted the little piano as if it were a pony. She tried to poke out a tune with one finger—the tune that Red Ida had sung, the one called, "Treat her like a baby." She fell into ludicrous blunders that made her laugh. Then she stumbled into an ancient Jewish melody that made her sad. She tried to sing it, but the index-finger accompaniment jarred her voice off the notes. She quit the piano and paced the floor with shut eyes, chanting like another Miriam.

By and by she was aware that some one was near. She stopped short and, turning, saw the black face and shining eyes of the cook Perry had installed for her.

"Oh, it's you, Martha; I did not hear you."

"But ah hud you, honey. Ah was listenin' at you wif bofe years. Keep right awn singin'; it's a beautiful sawng."

"It should be if I had the voice to sing."

"You sing better'n any mawkin'-bud. But, say, what dat language you sing? Ahrish?"

"No, no; it is old Hebrew song—'*Sholem Aleichem.*'"

"Sholem a-who-Kem?"

"It means 'Peace be with you.' At home we did sing it Sabbaths, in the eveninks when we have been by the temple. My father did sing and all the whole femmily." She sighed. "I shall not be by my home on New-Year's day."

"How can you tell, chile? New-Year's ain't doo fo' fo' months."

"Our New-Year's comes very soon — our Roshhashonah. I did buy post-carts already to send my people. Look."

She ran to fetch a batch of pasteboard atrocities. It was wonderful that anything could be made so ugly for so little money.

One of the cards framed a bit of white silk on which a cluster of dismal flowers was embroidered in uncongenial colors, over a Hebrew motto worked in lavender floss. On another was a gold wheelbarrow loaded with pansies as big as the wheel, and with huge forget-me-nots in blue-green and purple, not to mention two highly embossed white birds sprinkled with gilt tinsel.

The cards delighted Martha's Ethiopian ideals of art and Maryla's Oriental sense of grandeur.

The simplest of the cards contained a spray of violets and a greeting in Hebrew, with these graceful verses in English:

> Sorry I'm not with you to-day
> To utter my New-Year's Greetings;
> But hope ere twelve months pass away
> You and I will be meeting.

Maryla read this very dubious compliment as if it were a classic ode, and tears scurried from her eyes unexpectedly and spattered the cards. She made haste to dry them with her handkerchief lest they stain and spoil the design.

Maryla smiled to think how ecstatically her mother and her little fat sister, Dosia, would shriek over these beautiful things. Maryla had not gone home since she left off working at Dutilh's. She had not dared to go home and confront her father's eyes. She knew that in his eyes the beauty of her life would be hideous. He was very strict.

But she had sent many presents home—things to wear, to eat, to adorn oneself with; and not only to her mother and sister, but to her father, and even a trinket to Pasin-

sky, the boarder, her first admirer. These gifts were atonements, peace-offerings against the day she should venture back.

When her conscience revolted against her contentment, the best anesthetic she could find for it was the fact that her wickedness enabled her to send into that doleful home of hers things of beauty that otherwise would be unknown there. She used the word "wickedness" in imaginary quotation-marks, for she could not see anything harsh or hateful in the gentle graces of her new life.

The door-bell rang. It startled her. It would not be Perry—for he had his own key. A wild thought thrilled her that it might be her father come to punish her, to destroy her for her offense against him. She had sent her address with her last budget of gifts, hoping to get back a letter of thanks at least. What if she had brought his wrath about her head? She was afraid of him with the loving terror of a dog.

Martha answered the bell and shuffled back to say: "It's a—a ge'man; well, not 'zackly a ge'man, neither. He allowed his name was—er—er—somefin' endin' in 'insky.'"

"Not Balinsky, or Pasinsky?"

"I d'know, honey. All dem 'inskies' soun' alike to me."

"Well, ask him he should come in."

Maryla stole behind one of the curtains and watched with amusement the entrance of the family's lone star boarder.

Pasinsky edged in timidly and stared about the little flat as if it were a great hotel. Finding himself alone, he took a portière in his hands, folded it, and expertly snapped it to test its fabric. He carried on one arm one of the black leather market-bags they use in Allen Street. It was bulging full.

Maryla was so flattered by the awe on Pasinsky's face that she giggled and betrayed her hiding-place. Pasinsky's

low, broad derby hat rested on his ears. He scraped it off with humility. She ran out and caught both of his hands in hers, babbling:

"Oh, but I am gled to see you, Henryk. How are you? You have been well, yes? And how is mother? And little Dosia, is she happy? And papa, still well? And grandfather, does he cough yet? Oh, it is so good to see somebody! You are the only one I see since—since I did go away. The canary-beerd sings good, yes? Did they get the money I sent? What did they buy? Dosia, did she like the pretty dress and the hair-ribbons?"

She stopped laughing when she saw how pitiful was his smile and how big the tears were in his eyes.

"You don't speak, Henryk?"

"Ach, Maryla, you esk so many kvestions. I have only one to esk. Are you—was you—yet heppy?"

"Happy? I am in heaven. Sit down once." She motioned him to a chair and flung herself on the window-seat with such carelessness that one of her slippers fell off. Pasinsky bent to pick it up, but she checked him with a gesture. Then she pressed a button in the wall, and in a moment Martha was at the door.

"Did you ring, missy?"

"Yes," said Maryla, with a majestic yawn. "Peeck up my sleeper, pleasse."

"Yas*sum!*" said Martha, wondering at the improvement in Maryla's mind. She was chuckling like a brook as she fitted the slipper on Maryla's foot. Then Maryla motioned her out imperiously, and Martha backed away like a slave of Cleopatra's, except for her chuckles. She understood that Maryla was trying to impress her visitor, and she was in perfect sympathy. Through the closed door came her loud yah-hahs.

"You see," Maryla said, with the manner of a boastful child. "And you ask am I happy!"

"It is not the same like your own home," Pasinsky mumbled.

"I should say not. But isn't it fi-ine? And yet, Henryk, believe me, sometimes I get such a homesickness I want to go back. Honest! Would you believe me?"

"If only you did never vent away!" he sighed.

She caught his meaning, and the red flashed up her throat and over her cheeks so hotly that it seemed to blind her. She changed the subject at once. "What is it you got in that beg—presents for me?"

This threw him into a panic, and he said: "Presents I got. Yes, I got presents for you."

She ran and, seizing the bag, opened it and poured on the floor the gifts she had sent home, all of them, even the money. She sank down by them, and now a snow-white blush overran her face even to the lips.

"My presents! My presents!" she moaned. "But for why?"

"I don't vant to told you."

"Yes, yes, you got to!"

"Vell, he says—your fadder—not me! I dun't said it—your fadder says—you did buyed dese t'inks vit de vages of—of—"

"Sin?" She groaned that hateful word—that other people's word.

Pasinsky nodded and turned his eyes away as from a nakedness. And indeed she felt stripped of her fine raiment and fallen in a heap. The floor where she huddled was the foot of the cliff. The upholding wings of Lucifer had closed beneath her at last and let her crash. She was so despicable that her gifts were insults, her atonements were swept from the altar with disdain.

Pasinsky made haste to finish his dismal business. He spoke as if he were the guilty one making the confession, instead of the herald of the condemning judge.

"I dun't like sayink it, Maryla—you know I dun't like—but your fadder makes me promise to told you, how de Sokalskis dey are poor and voik hart, and are grinded

into de dost, but not yet—not yet vill dey take moneysh from de—de shame of a daughter of Israel."

Maryla took the judgment upon her bent neck. There was nothing to answer that her father or his messenger could understand. Men did not need pretty things and caresses, and tenderness, especially not such men as her father, who found his luxury in economy, made a revel over a penny saved and a funeral over anything it bought.

She could not understand the glory of the malekind that tries to make and keep a home, not only for to-day's comfort, but against to-morrow's menace; the spirit that takes pride in thrift, and finds more beauty in rags receipted for than in mortgaged silks that belong to some cheated creditor.

Maryla stared at the rejected heap of graces, for which she had exchanged the little ugly handful of bills and coins that Perry Merithew had tossed on the table for her to squander.

Her idle hand lifted a gorgeous waist she had bought for her mother; a coquettish hat for Dosia with a joyous feather on it; a wheel of scarlet ribbons for Dosia's hair. Her only answer to Pasinsky's death-warrant was at last a sorrowful question:

"Papa had a right to leave poor Mütterchen her waist—and Dosia—what did Dosia say?"

"It was soch a cryink, dey say not moch."

Maryla stared at the spoils of her dalliance and sighed: "It is so ogly to be poor! It is so shameful ogly to be poor!" After a time she asked, without looking up, "Henryk, do you—do you think of me what my fadder thinks?"

Pasinsky spun his hideous derby round and round as he answered: "Maryla, I am all a time dreamink. Your fadder says I am a loafer, but me, I vant it all people should be heppy and have deir vish, and make alvays laughink. Sometimes I t'ink I dun't care how somebody gets a heppiness choost so dey get it. And more as avery-

body in de voilt it iss you, Maryla, I vant it should get a heppiness."

She raised brimming eyes of gratitude. He was a Perry Merithew in shoddy, the woman-idolator that goes proudly bankrupt to prettify pretty creatures, and takes his pay in their increased prestige and their selfish enhancement.

"You are heppy, yes?" he pleaded.

"I was," she sighed.

"He loafs you?"

Blushes were set in her cheeks like sudden roses and the shame that cast her eyes down was a delicious shame. She nodded. Pasinsky asked the question that changed the roses to another red and weighted the eyelids heavier.

"For why dun't you marry yoursellufs?"

It was a question Maryla had often asked her own heart, but never her lover. There was a sacredness about her happiness that made it honest to her, and she longed for Perry to make it honest to the world. He had told her that they would live as Mr. and Mrs. Brown; this spurious title was all he had granted her, and it was for the janitor's sake. But her bliss was too terribly great to imperil by any demands. She had cherished a foolish trust that if she were devoted enough, and patient and cheerful enough, she might make herself indispensable to Perry.

Pasinsky's question was inopportune, premature, inconvenient, and therefore impertinent. She resented it with the swift anger of guilt, and rose against him.

"For why do you think we are not married?"

Pasinsky felt sorry that she should have to try to lie out of it; he shook his head mercifully. "Ach, Maryla, Maryla, you should come home once!"

He took her hands in his, and his tolerance broke her. She went into his arms and wept. He was all the family she had.

There Perry Merithew found her when he let himself in

with his latch-key. They did not hear him. He stared at them in anger, then in a more insulting amusement. Seeing what manner of man Pasinsky was, the exquisite Perry realized the quality of Maryla's origin. He sneered less at her than at himself. He was ashamed not of his sin, but of his partner in it.

CHAPTER XLVI

PERRY laughed softly, and Maryla, hearing him, started from Pasinsky's embrace and stared at him. Her terror lest he misunderstand and be jealous gave way to a greater terror, for she understood instantly the scornful amusement on his face. All she could say was a stammering:

"How—how do you do? You should meet Mr. Pasinsky Mr.—Brown."

Pasinsky's first glance gave him Perry's measure. He shuddered for Maryla, and faltered, "I am pleased to meet your ackvaintunce."

Neither man offered the other his hand. Their prides were equal, unless Pasinsky were the more contemptuous.

Maryla explained: "Mr. Pasinsky is an old friend. He lives by our house."

Perry nodded and stepped away from the door, as much as to say, "Get out quietly!"

Pasinsky realized his meaning and could have killed him if Maryla's eyes had not been so full of worship. So he obeyed, mumbling: "I gotta go now. Goot-by, Maryla. Goot-by, Meesteh—Meesteh—Brown?"

"Good night," said Perry.

Maryla went to the door with Pasinsky. When she came back Perry was seated in a chair with his cane athwart his crossed knees, and his hat on the back of his head. It was as if he had put up a barrier against the usual rapture of her greeting. She closed the door and fell back against it, waiting for him to say something.

He said, "And who's all that?"

"He is a friend of my people like I told you."

Perry nodded toward the heap on the floor. "And what's all that?"

Maryla told the truth. "I did send home some presents to my people. My fadder would not keep them."

"And why not?"

It was not easy for her, but she confessed, "He thinks I should not ought to be here."

To her dismay, Perry's comment was brusque: "I agree with him."

It was like a fist against her breast. She recoiled in pain. Perry hated his task, but he had found that the best way to be rid of mistresses was to ignore their sentimental torments and finish the business in a business-like way, short and sharp:

"Maryla, I've got bad news."

She hurried to a chair and sank into it as if to sit down before the blow could knock her down.

He said: "Maryla, I'm going to—I've got to go abroad —to Europe." She was so distressed that he softened the blow with a compassionate lie. "I've got to go—on business. I—I'm sorry, but I've got to go. It's on business—important business. I'm sorry."

"You come soon beck?" she parleyed, knowing that the end had come.

"Er—no—not for a long time. I really don't know when—but not for some time."

She gave him every opportunity to help her. "I will wait."

"You'd better not," he went on, hating her meekness. "You can stay here till you make your plans. I had to take a lease for four months. You might as well live here. I'll leave you some money—not as much as I'd like, for I'm hard up—but some money."

"I thenk you, no," she said, shaking her head.

He thought of what an indemnity Aphra Shaler would have demanded, and he urged: "Oh, I insist. It's only fair to you."

"Only fair to me!" she echoed with a sick smile. She wanted to scream. She wanted to attack him with a frenzy of hate or of love; she could not tell which.

But she was slow in everything; serene in sin, and demure in her first wrath. She had only her pride to govern her swirl of thoughts, and her pride commanded her to take no charity from this man, to quit on equal terms. She set her chin high on a tortured throat, and said:

"Don't worry about me. I go. I go."

From her finger she twisted the ring he had bought her—a gorgeous Montana diamond. From her throat she unclasped the necklace of reconstructed pearls. It was hard to unlock. That little annoyance almost wrecked her self-control. She came near tearing it to pieces in her impatience.

She laid all his jewelry on the table. Perry glared at it, blushing at its cheapness and at its return. He groped futilely for words.

She went into the bedroom and got out the little black gown she had worn from Dutilh's shop, the frock she had on in Fort Washington Park. She unshipped the top hook of the waist she had bought with Perry's money; then remembering, she drew the heavy portières that were the only door.

The lonely closing of those funereal hangings shamed Perry and inclined him to remorse. He felt that he must deal more gently with Maryla. He must plead with her not to be hurt, not to refuse to keep his money.

He parted the curtains and went in where she was, surprising her between the two costumes. She was very, very pretty in a short, white, blue-ribboned affair. He thought that there was no need to hasten her eviction from his life.

He set his hands on her shoulders and drew her close, and murmured, "Now, little Just Only Maryla, you mustn't."

But she felt herself already divorced from him. He

had lost the right to see her. His caress was a familiarity. With a spasm of revulsion and a sound like a mad dog's cry she writhed away and struck him backward in the face. Her taloned fingers gouged his cheek and brought blood to his torn lips. He felt the loathing in her wrath and he knew that he would have scars to explain, and he snarled:

"You damned little beast!"

But she glared at him murderously and laughed uglily: "Huh-huh! huh-huh!"

He put his handkerchief to his mouth and leaned forward in unwonted gawkiness lest the blood drip on his gray plaid coat. Then he went into the bath-room and slapped cold water on his wounds, while Maryla hastily stepped into her old skirt and drew the frock up over her shoulders and fastened it, and put her hat on.

Maryla was so bewildered with dismay that she put into her hat the hat-pin he had bought for her one day—an amethyst-headed hat-pin, with the amethyst held in a gilded claw. She forgot that it was his purchase. It was the only jewelry he had bought her that she carried with her when she hurried through the curtains and out of the door. She was afraid to meet the eye of the sophisticated elevator-boy, and she trotted down the nine flights of stairs winding about the shaft.

It seemed that the descent would lead her on down into sheol, but at last she reached the ground floor and walked out of the ornate portal of her gingerbread palace to the pavement. She would have collided with the passers-by if they had not taken pains to avoid her. She moved straight across the wide street. A loping horse drawing a delivery-wagon reared and swerved, or he would have trampled her. The driver of a scudding taxicab turned smartly aside and almost collided with another, or he would have struck her down. The motormen of a north-bound street-car and a south-bound street-car flung

themselves furiously on their brakes or the one would have smitten her dead and hurled her body into the guard of the other. She heard neither their yells of warning nor their jeers of revilement.

She marched in an aisle of safety as the Israelites fled between the reverted waves of the Red Sea. She blundered against the low Park wall, then turned south and kept one hand on it till she found a gate.

CHAPTER XLVII

SHE marched through the thicker night of the winding roads. She paused to rest on the benches now and then, but her mood was onward, and she trudged the miles to the Plaza. All about her were vague couples making love. Their embraces disgusted her. The fog that was so dense on the Bay, where Dr. Worthing was bidding good-by to Muriel Schuyler, was here no more than a thin white smoke softening the lights into half-tone and blurring the shadows.

She plodded down Fifth Avenue, past the boarded-up palaces, the locked-up churches, the dark-windowed shops, through all the architectural strata down to the lower depths below Washington Square. She turned east. She dragged herself along like a Belgian refugee fleeing from the destruction of her little Louvain to the miserable charity of overcrowded slums.

She was so lonely and so weary that the thought of home had grown as sweet to her as paradise. She climbed the stairs like a pilgrim toiling the last few steps to heaven. She foresaw a rapturous welcome. Her own people became the very symbols of love and of welcome.

She paused at the door to hear the familiar music of the sewing-machines, the huge crickets of her hearthless home. She did not think of knocking, for it was her home. She opened the door and stepped in. No one heard her over the low rumor of the machines. Her grandfather, still seeming to stitch his white beard into the cloth, saw her and tried to speak, but his coughing choked him and nobody heeded his eternal racket.

In the stifling air, in the stinted light, they were all

sewing; treadling away at their same old everlasting, ever-hateful bicycle race. Fond as she was of them all, hungry as she was to be at home, she was hit in the face by the hard reality. She could not imagine beauty or comfort here where both had starved. The dream-walk was over, and the truth was worse than the nightmare. Yet this was her one haven, and the fat old slave at the farthest machine was all the mother she had ever had. And the need of sheltering arms wrung from her the cry, "Mamma!"

All the machines stopped. Three of the weary riders turned to stare with superstitious dread. Big little Dosia was the first to understand. She whirled and ran to Maryla with her arms outstretched. After her waddled her mother, shrieking with joy. Pasinsky rose and stood by his machine.

Adam alone did not rise. He had not even turned his head. He knew that voice. He had heard it when this Jezebel of a daughter was a tiny child grasping at her mother's young breast. She used to thrust her little hand into his beard and cling to a fistful of it till the tears came to his eyes. He could imagine back those old scenes, but also, and all too vividly, he could imagine his child in the arms of the man that had desecrated her.

Adam Sokalski was of those who have such horror of defilement that when they see a chalice soiled they will not cleanse it nor reclaim it; they blame it for its own misfortune and hurl it out of sight or destroy it.

Adam had loved Maryla well, and hoped that she would be a good daughter till she became a good wife and a good mother and a good grandmother, and so on to a good funeral. She had thrown his hopes into the muck of the world. He longed to be rid of her.

When Dosia and Rosa had crushed and smothered Maryla with their welcome, they turned to see Adam bowed across his machine, his fierce hands clenched in

his beard. His back was arched like Atlas's under the load of the heavy world.

Rosa led Maryla forward timidly, murmuring, "Papa —papa—Maryla iss come beck!"

"I dun't know no Maryla."

"*Ach*, papa!" Rosa pleaded. "Pleass! Pleass!"

"Once I had a Maryla, but she is voisser as dett alretty. A cholera on the *Goy* vat made her so."

"*Ja, ja*, on him, but not on Maryla."

"*An Maryla auch!* Und more yet. He vas only a Chreestian, but she knowed. Comes she here, I toin her owit. I make the door shut in her face."

Maryla, with a grimace of despair, tried to put away the clutching hands of her mother and go. But Rosa held her fast, imploring:

"*Nu, nu!* Papa! papa! Toin around once. Look!"

Adam rose ominously, turned slowly, stared through fanatic eyes. "Who iss it? I dun't know who iss it. *Ach, ja*, now I know. It iss dot fine Chreestian lady. Vat makes she here? She iss in de wrong ho'se."

Pasinsky put out his hand. "Meester Sokalski, I esk you—I esk you." Adam knocked his hand away. Pasinsky appealed to his penury in crafty words. "You should not sendet her avay. She sews good. She makes moch money. Vinter comes soon now."

Adam retorted, with nausea: "She makes more money by—by—" Then he broke. "*Ach weh! weh! weh!* mine baby is dett!"

He wept loudly, winding his arms about his head like sackcloth.

Rosa and Dosia ran to him, plied him with prayers to keep her home, to forgive her. Maryla did not speak. She stared at her father, and through him at life and its cruelty. The clay in Adam's heart ached to take her back, but the patriarchal spirit of Mosaic bookkeeping abhorred such easy cancellation of debt. Yet at length he submitted.

"All right. Ve keep her. But dun't forgot, Maryla, everybody knows vot you ditt. Your name is a hissink in Ollen Street. You vill be call 'dot Chreestian vomans.' It is de most ponishment to let you stay."

Maryla was malcontent with life. Suddenly she rebelled: "For why should I live any more? For why? Everybody hates me—everybody is glad if I am dead."

Her hand slid along the leaf of the nearest machine to a pair of great shears—the very shears that Balinsky had pressed to his side. She set the double points against her left breast, and would have hammered them in if Pasinsky had not darted forward and knocked them clattering to the floor. He caught her hands in his, shouting:

"You should not hoit yourselluf. I dun't care vat you ditt. I loaf you. You can't loaf me, but you gotta live. I gotta have you livink here vere I can see you."

He fell to his knees, clinging to her hands and praying to her as to a queen, and she turned away as if he were presumptuous. She dragged her fingers from his grip, but he clung about her waist, maundering so frantically that Adam was revolted. His contempt was like spittle in Pasinsky's face.

"Vat for a dog are you to loaf soch a—soch a—"

Before he could venture the word Pasinsky's hand darted out and snatched the shears from the floor, and he sprang to his feet, crying:

"Adam Sokalski, you say it und I kill you. Make choost once anudder mean void, und I cut de heart out from you."

Adam was less terrorized than dazed. He flung out his hands in a wide shrug and went back to his sewing-machine. He could understand that so many steps on the treadle meant so many stitches and so many garments finished. That was about all that was left to him to understand.

Pasinsky's outburst was exhausted by its triumph, and

he dropped into a chair, sobbing. Maryla envied him his sobs and the woe they released. She stood by him, patting his shoulders and comforting him.

"I stay, Henryk. I stay, if you won't cry any more."

Instantly Pasinsky's childish grief was altered to sobs of laughter. He hugged her hands like miser's gold, and mumbled them. "Ve shall be heppy, too. You see! Tairrible heppy. You goink have nice t'ings vitout help of *Goyim*. I got *viel Geld*. For two years I am savink, und now it iss for you. See!"

He thrust his hand inside his shirt and unpinned a worn old wallet, and spilled on the sewing-machine a tiny wealth of bills and coins. He spread it with his fingers, counting, "*Ein—fünf—zwanzig—sieben und dreissig.*" He told it greedily past the hundred. Then he pushed it together and proffered it to her with a flourish.

Maryla understood how mighty the sum was in his eyes, and she smiled. But she shook her head.

"Thenk you, Henryk, but I don't want it your money. I want it to woik, and to help my mamma and my Dosia and—and my papa what hates me."

Adam's sewing-machine ran slower, as if relenting, then pushed grimly on again. Maryla took off her hat, laying down the hat-pin which Dosia caught up with cries of admiration. Maryla blushed. She had thought she had brought nothing of Merithew's away. She was tempted to thrust the hat-pin into the stove, but she remembered how gracious Perry had been when she saw it and exclaimed upon it in the little up-town jewelry-shop, and how he had dragged her inside to purchase it and had bought her a little ring besides.

So she restored the hat-pin to the hat and hung the hat on its old hook in the wardrobe. Then she came briskly back to the sewing-machine that had been hers.

"It is good to be home," she said, bravely. "And to woik is good." She looked at the devout Pasinsky. "But for why is it people cannot love the people they had

ought to love? For why must somebody always love somebody far off or wrong?"

Maryla set her way-worn feet on the treadles, and the thread paid out into the fabric, the coarse, sharp "pants" for poor workmen. Soon she grew wonderfully drowsy. The wheel ran slower and slower, and she fell asleep with her brow on the back of her hand.

Her father woke her with a not unkindly roughness and ordered her to bed. She tottered to her boudoir under the shelf among the clothes behind the curtain, and undressed while she wavered with sleep. She put on again the coarse nightgown of her wont. She stretched herself out on the hard bed that she shared with Dosia, and on the instant she slept. Her mother bent over her with the down-gazing worship of mothers. Her father did not look at her, but he felt glad to have her safe.

It was still dark when Maryla woke. Dosia sprawled and usurped more than her share. For all her fat, her knees were sharp. Adam's snore rattled and squawked and ended like a policeman's whistle. Rosa snored in snorts of peculiar swinishness.

Slowly the daybreak opened a window in the wall of darkness. Slowly it built anew the furniture of the room—the idle little sewing-engines, the backs of chairs. Maryla made out her father's profile, his head far back, his mouth a cleft of agony between his mustache and his upward-pointed beard.

Her mother's body extended in great billows, her fat head rolled down upon her up-rolling bosom. In the corner on a cot the tousled head of Pasinsky looked decapitated on its pillow. The morning light burned in white spots on the edges of pots and pans.

Outside the dirty window she could see across the street other dirty windows and rusty fire-escapes, littered.

She remembered the fine linen of her yester home, the silk coverlet, the morning light gilding the satiny brass

rail of her bedstead and flickering like water on the white tile of the bath-room. From that bed she could see across the gilt furniture, past the lacy curtains at the window-seat, out to where the tops of green trees were fluttering plumily. She had but to press a button and the maid came at her call and brought in her ebon hands on an ivorish tray a banquet of fruit and coffee and toast, with a little squat jug of cream. Better than the food was the china and the napery.

Then she remembered the countless mornings of her life at home, the death of unappeased sleep whence her father used to drag her to her work. She remembered the many mornings when she had wakened early because she was too sleepy to sleep; and how often she had seen her father's snores choked off, had seen his heavy eyes start open in alarm at the light; how she had watched him fight the old battle between need and fatigue, and struggle to his elbow and nudge her mother, groaning:

"Rosa, *'s ist heller Tag!*"

How often she had seen her mother roll out to the floor, trying to shake the dear slumber from her famished eyes! And then the clatter of starting the fire.

The miserable every-morning resurrection for the doomsday of toil.

Here loving was loafing, kisses and caresses were a foolishness, silks and jewels and gracious attitudes and plaiting of the hair were a wickedness. Everything that was desirable was abomination—everything abominable was duty.

She had escaped it once, and she had come back to take up the old burden of shame. These denizens of the slime would despise her. Suddenly she felt that it was only her return that was despicable.

In the window the dingy canary was flopping from perch to perch and back again, pecking at the bars, trying to find a way out into the deepening sunlight. Maryla remembered the free birds she had seen in Fort Washing-

ton Park with huge tulip-trees for their perches and the world for their cage. She remembered that she had promised her own his liberty. She rose and ran barefooted to the window and opened the little wire door.

The bird was afraid of freedom as she had been, and flung itself here and there in the corners with frantic wings. At last she turned the cage on the side, tilted it till the bird fell through, saved itself with unaccustomed struggles, found itself outside, and fluttered to the railing of the fire-escape, wondering at its enfranchisement and afraid of the universe.

She whispered to it: "Fly away—leetla beerd—fly away—don't be scared."

But it hopped along the rusty iron rail, chirping ungrateful protests. She thrust out her bare arm and shook her fingers at it. And then it made off on uncertain pinions. It drew a little golden wire of flight to the foreign cornice on the other side of the cañon and rested from the great voyage. Maryla rejoiced at her deed till a little gang of cockney sparrows saw it and, jealous of its yellow finery, mobbed it and drove it into the wilderness.

Maryla pondered the dubious benefit of its liberty a moment and took an omen from it. She surrendered to her lot, and was creeping, chilled, back into her bed, when one more glance about the tenement sickened her of poverty so violently that she ran behind the curtain of the wardrobe.

When she emerged she was dressed. She sat on a chair and buttoned her boots stealthily. She found her hat and fastened it to her hair with the amethyst-headed pin.

She was faint with hunger, and was tempted to make coffee, but she feared to linger. Her father's soul was beginning to do battle with sleep, and she knew that if she caught his eye he would redominate her.

She passed the heap of money Pasinsky had left where he poured it out for her. She hesitated, then she felt that it would please him if she took a little of it. She drew

away a ten-dollar bill and a few pieces of silver, and went atiptoe to the door, unlocked it slowly, and opened it so cautiously that it could not squeal in alarm. She paused to whisper to the wretched prisoners she left behind:

"Good-by—good-by!"

Then she stepped into the hall and closed the door delicately without sound.

CHAPTER XLVIII

MARYLA hurried along the streets where everybody abroad thus betimes seemed to be still haggard with unrequited drowsiness.

She took a street-car to her former boarding-place, and was welcomed to a hall bedroom exactly like her old one, and exactly like ten thousand others in town.

Then she went to Dutilh's shop, and with a desperately casual smile prepared to broach the elaborate lie she had woven.

Before she could say that she had been called out of town by the sudden illness of a dear relative, Dutilh stormed at her:

"Oh, there you are, are you? My God, but you're late! Go hang up your hat, and tell Mrs. Shenstone to slam you into that new Callot."

He flounced away, and Maryla gazed after him with mingled shame and adoration. She knew that he understood.

Dutilh was experienced in this sort of thing. His experience had educated him beyond sneers or sermons or amusement. He felt sorry that one more pretty adventuress had tried the primrose path and then been chucked out of it. Since the rush for fall and winter clothes was on, and he could find employment for her again, he was willing to save her the trouble of explanatory fables. He did not resemble a philanthropist, but the person who gives a "fallen" girl the pick-up of a job is the truest charity-worker of all.

And so Maryla resumed her life as a traveler through numberless beautiful robes. She suffered less desire now

to own what she wore. She was glad to tire herself out at her task, since fatigue was the perfect opiate for the long nights and the loneliness and hurt pride. She tired more easily than before, and she was the prey of an incessant terror until a mystic negative signal changed suspense to despair and she knew that she was in the employ of nature. Nature had decoyed her into the great trap, and she was the white slave of posterity.

She began to save her meager earnings with a fierce economy—feathering her nest she was. She added to her income by spending her evenings at embroidery, and she grew deft, since what she made had to be good enough to sell. She showed Dutilh some of her work, and he bought it from her with a kind of pitying gentleness that terrified her, since it implied that his womanly intuition was still at work.

It happened that the whim of fashion had suddenly altered from clinging integuments to loose-waisted, wide-frilled fantasies of eccentric design; and that was to Maryla's advantage while autumn drifted into winter and December lapsed into January.

Shortly after the Christian New-Year had been celebrated with pagan festival, Maryla found that the distance between her boarding-house and the shop had grown immensely longer, and it was up-hill both ways. Now-a-mornings she was exhausted when she reached the clothes conservatory, and it was such a task exchanging her street shoes for her slippers that she almost fell forward on her face.

One afternoon Mrs. Shenstone brought her a gown of more sedate maturity than Maryla usually exhibited. When she walked out in it, she found that Dutilh was paying great deference to a beautiful matron whose white hair was like a graceful sarcasm. At her side was a very young man dressed with the swagger of a collegian. The woman seemed to like the gown Maryla marched in, but the young man growled:

"Ah, cut it out, mater. That 'll do for your coming-in party at the Old Ladies' Home; but I'm taking you to a dance, and you're going to be the kid sister of all the girls."

The woman frowned amiably: "Now, Perry, don't flatter your old mother." And she smiled up to Dutilh. "My son is home on his first college vacation, and he insists on dragging me to a dance. He wouldn't let me buy anything at my usual shop. He said he'd stake me to something giddy."

"Your son is quite right," said Dutilh. "It makes me sick to see a young and beautiful débutante let herself be pushed into the chaperon class. Your son has his father's good taste. Is he still abroad, your husband—Mrs. Merithew?"

Maryla felt the floor see-sawing beneath her. She turned and made blindly for the dressing-room. She heard Dutilh calling something to her, but she dared not pause to find out what it was. She ran to Mrs. Shenstone, maundering: "Get me out of this! Get me out of this!"

She began to flap her hands and beat her breast as if she were suffocating. Mrs. Shenstone whipped the costume over her head and pushed her into a chair.

Dutilh followed close, and was about to berate Maryla when he saw her state of mind. The hysterical typhoon that swept his models without warning was a hazard of the trade. But they held one field where men could not be substituted for them.

Dutilh expended on Mrs. Shenstone the vitriol he had prepared for Maryla: "Put that Cubist gown on one of the other girls and hustle her out. And let Maryla alone. Can't you see she's sick?"

The substitute was wrapped in a fantastic costume and hurried to the firing-line. Mrs. Shenstone followed, and Maryla, abandoned to solitude, regained control of her-

self. But she sat still, brooding over many things. The final horror of her plight was the discovery that Merithew had a wife and a grown son.

A little later Dutilh poked his head in at the door. He was almost shy in his manner when he spoke: "You're on your feet too much, my child. You run along home and stay there till you get stronger."

"But money—I've got to make money!"

"I'll keep you busy at embroidery jobs, and you'll make just as much there as here. Run along now and take care of yourself. If you need anything, or any friends, let me know. And for God's sake don't blubber. Get out now. I'm busy."

Maryla could not find words to express her gratitude and her contrition, but her eyes were flooded with thanks.

She went slowly back to her boarding-house. She managed by working almost from morning to morning to earn something more than her living expenses. Her savings she put away in a safe place against the great début.

She had ample time to ponder the solemn consequences of her frivolous romance. She was honest enough to blame herself for her misfortune more than the man. She felt that she was undergoing a righteous penance. She had done heinous wrong and had known it at the time. Half of the wild sweetness of her sin had been the sin of it. Jehovah was a just God. He was a shrewd collector, but He did not cheat.

But the man—where was he? What penalty was he paying? What penalty would ever be exacted from him?

She felt that Perry Merithew was a very miserable scoundrel. He had a beautiful wife and a fine son, yet he did not keep good. She began to see why such light, handsome, amusing merrymen as he were regarded with contempt and hostility by solemner men like her father. She began to feel that her father, hard-toiling, home-keeping sloven that he was, was a more beautiful soul

than the exquisite Perry. She began to understand what ugly things result from the longing for pretty things.

She began to despise Merry Perry, and from that to hate him—yet deliberately as always. Her love ebbed out tardily, and her hatred replaced it tardily, but it was filling her soul. Her mood was no longer one of hurt pride, of cowering shame, and meek repentance. It was an Israelitic mood of wrath against the snarer of her feet, of wrath against the coward who gave women sons and abandoned them.

She began to hate him with the wild-beast hatred a young female animal feels for the father of its young.

Dire schemes of punishment began to occupy her thoughts. She sat alone in a little cold room, embroidering flowers of thread upon meshes of thread, and crocheting snares for Merry Perry's feet to revenge the snares he had spread for hers.

CHAPTER XLIX

MURIEL had not meant to stay away so long, but fear of the New York newspapers and of the police kept her abroad till the spell of Europe regained control over her.

Friends and relatives of hers were sown broadcast about Europe by international marriages. She was beckoned from château to castle, and from Schloss to palazzo, with various hotels between. She received more or less unwelcome tuition in the courtship customs of various nations, and she heard the words "beautiful," "cruel," "adoration," "mercy," and "marriage" in several languages. She laughed at them all more or less sincerely, and liked men more or less polyandrously, never dreaming that within a year most of them would be crouching in battle-trenches, or fighting in the clouds or under the sea, or writhing in military hospitals or buried in lonely ditches. And that Perry Merithew would be dead in New York.

She traversed the Europe that will never be again. She dallied in Rheims and in Louvain and Liège. Officers of every uniform attempted flirtations with her. They had little to excite them then except their studies for a war that was ridiculously improbable.

Muriel had qualms of conscience for the neglected children of her own country, and she vowed that she would take every next steamer that was sailing westward. But she was young, and the selection of a mate was inevitably her chief industry. And she could always find some excuse before her own accusatory self by blaming her father and mother.

The long crossing on the yacht had given her time to write to Worthing almost every day, and from the first port they touched she had sent him a mass of pages that was a trifle small for a volume, but ponderous for a letter.

The letter had glowed with a distinct feeling that all of the poor of New York were her immediate children, and that Dr. Worthing was their spiritual father and actual guardian till she returned. But the rich and poor of Europe eclipsed the distant pauperdom, and by the time Dr. Worthing had received her letter and his answer had reached her, she had pretty well forgotten exactly what she had said. Also, she seemed to feel that his answer lacked the ebullience of her letter.

And that was true. In Muriel's presence Worthing was another man. She had come at him out of the dark like an automobile at night; the look in her eyes blinded him like a pair of headlights. He did not know how to steer his own heart except straight into the light.

But when she had gone on down the road he found himself in the dark again—in the gutter with his little tin car, ashamed of the contrast with the imported limousine that glided by, glistening and sumptuous.

A rich young man in love with a poor young woman has always been a romantic and noble person in any literature; but in America, at least, the other way about leaves the young man ridiculous and ignoble. Suppose Worthing made conquest of Muriel and became her husband, what would he be on that yacht but a poor relation by marriage? His salary for a year would not pay to keep the yacht in commission for a week.

Dr. Worthing did not believe in vermiform appendices. He cut them off when he had the slightest excuse. He would not care to be the vermiform appendix of a rich family.

When he received Muriel's first letter it threw him into a fever of longing, but he refrained from answering it till

cold reason had assuaged his temperature. Then he wrote amiably, with an unintentional effect of condescension. Muriel, finding her first rhapsody answered long after she had written other rhapsodies, felt the aloofness of his manner and resented it. Her next letter showed that feeling. It reached him in time to allay the fever her previous letters had wrought him to again. His answer to that was one of iciclic phrasing.

Correspondence across the ocean is one long anachronism at best, since the letter that arrives is never in answer to the last one sent, and never finds one in the same mood.

Muriel learned that the Balinskys had been rescued from deportation at the President's direct order. In fact, the President had answered Muriel's letter to him in much the same spirit, and had won from her the final praise that he was "an awfully nice man."

Worthing wrote that he had put the girl Rachel into an institution, where she was having the best of care. He wrote her that Happy Hanigan's operation had not been the success expected, and his recuperation had not been ideal. A further operation was required, since the poverty of the boy's parents, his poor food, and his hardships and the delay in submitting to surgery had all worked against him; but that he was now enjoying all the resources of science.

Worthing, indeed, had left his place as interne at Bellevue for a post on the staff of Dr. Eccleston, who had made him his assistant and opened up to him a suddenly enlarged career. He bought himself a little automobilette —on borrowed money—in order to visit the patients he expected to acquire.

His earnings had doubled now; and yet, in the presence of a thousand, twice two is not much more than once two was in the first place. He realized this in time to keep from cabling Muriel a proposal of marriage.

Muriel wrote a tear-stained letter over Happy Hani-

gan's delayed miracle, and she wrote a letter full of superlatives over Worthing's success; but he was busy at his solemn tasks, and she at her trade of pastimes.

Muriel read in the Paris *Herald* and in the belated American papers of the bitter winter New York was experiencing, and how the unemployed and the unsheltered myriads suffered; how even the Municipal Lodging-House could not provide for the doleful flocks harried in by the wolfish night winds.

She begged to go home to their aid, but her mother refused to cross the ocean in midwinter, and forbade Muriel to go over alone. They sent subscriptions and instructions to Mr. Chivot to relax the purse-strings, but that was not the same.

Perry Merithew bobbed up shortly after her arrival in Europe, and expressed a somewhat overdone surprise and a somewhat overstrained delight at happening upon the Schuylers in the lobby of the Opéra.

Mrs. Schuyler spoiled his evening by saying: "And how is your darling wife? And is she with you? And your dear boy? How is he liking Harvard?"

Perry said that his boy was playing hard at college, and his wife would join him shortly. This reassured Mrs. Schuyler, and she permitted Perry to be handy man about the town. He paid violent court to Mrs. Schuyler, and seemed to leave Muriel so much in the lurch that she gave him a good deal of attention when she could. She made one or two excursions with Perry to places where a careful young girl does not take her innocent old mother. But she was in small danger from the dangerous Perry, because he reverenced her with a solemnity he had not dreamed himself capable of. He was rather proud of himself.

The fantastic mushroom notion of making Muriel his wife flourished in the subcellar of his soul. He determined that as soon as the present wearer of his "Mrs." arrived abroad he would broach the subject of a divorce.

Mrs. Perry came; he broached it; and she declined it. She asked him who his new fancy was, and she suspected everybody but Muriel. He vowed that he would force her to free him, but she laughed back the discouraging statement that if she had stood as much as she had stood all these years, she would manage to stand still worse if he could manage to achieve it.

Mrs. Merithew was determined to keep up the home for their boy's sake. A cynical mind might have wondered what the word "home" could represent, with the father always away and always unfaithful, and the mother indifferent.

When Perry sought to escape from his wife back to Muriel's environment, he found that both Muriel and her mother insisted on including Mrs. Merithew in all their invitations, and she persisted in accepting them.

The difficulties of courting the future Mrs. Merithew under the lorgnon of the present Mrs. Merithew were too severe even for Perry's advanced technic, and he gave up trying.

Just in time the neglected Aphra Shaler arrived abroad with an enormously wealthy and ignorant copper-crat, who blatantly criticized the frog-eating Frenchies and generally disgraced America by the things he found fault with in France. He was so tiresome and crass that even Aphra was ashamed to be seen—and heard—with him. Perry found a melancholy amusement in borrowing her from his bewildered compatriot.

Mrs. Merithew, disgusted, went back to America to spend the Christmas vacation with her son. By that time Perry had lost track of Muriel and lost patience with Aphra. He sought distraction in Monte Carlo and in Tangiers, but a longing to settle down was driving him to a frenzy.

In the spring he went back to Paris, bent on desperate courtship; but he found that Muriel had gone to Carlsbad. Perry hated Carlsbad, but he followed her thither,

and stomached the waters in order to quaff the nectar of Muriel's presence; spent hours of promenade with Jacob and with Susan for the sake of being near Muriel. She made no bones of leaving him stranded with her parents when younger suitors proffered more congenial entertainment.

All in all, Perry's cup of life tasted just like the Sprudel water he imbibed—insipid, lukewarm, acrid.

The improvement the water he drank worked on his liver was lost in the aggravated distress of his spleen, and at length he pronounced himself cured and fled.

CHAPTER L

MARYLA'S landlady had had her suspicions for some time; but she needed the rental money, and mind-your-own-business was her policy. This protected Maryla till two older and more profitable tenants threatened to leave, whereupon she rose in her wrath and expelled Maryla.

The landlady's language and manner were not gracious, but her moral springboard was fastened on the very bulwarks of society. Lodging-houses cannot succeed in attracting substantial customers if they encourage young unmarried ladies to excesses of domesticity. And, if anybody is ever going to rebuke anything at all, it would surely be such disregard of the purity and security of the race as Maryla had shown.

In the black wrath of her shame, as she lugged her belongings down the street, Maryla made one weary, half-insane resolve to find Perry and force him to provide for her or skewer his miserable heart with the amethystine pin. But Perry had not yet come back from Europe, and she accepted her doom as something arranged.

When she found other lodgings she gave out that she was the widow of an imaginary man recently run over by a street-car. There are so many such widows that the story was accepted without inquiry. Maryla was persuaded by her new landlady to save danger and expense by intrusting herself to a maternity hospital, where the benevolent city acted as Lucina with as much skill and precaution as a millionaire could have procured.

Maryla was aghast to find that she did not feel an instant passion of love for the child. She had hated its father and herself so much that there was no love for the baby's heritage. It was a girl, and naturally not pretty at first, and naturally very noisy and nasty and exacting and selfish; and it kept very irregular hours.

In due time Maryla crept back to her boarding-house with her new luggage. The baby proclaimed its arrival with a fanfare of uproar. It was its own brass band. It made itself a nuisance to the boarders, who needed sleep occasionally. A baby makes a large crowd in a small bedroom, and it interfered with Maryla's ability to earn the very money itself required in such abundance.

Maryla had moods of pride and idolatry and frenzies of love, but even these told her that it was for the baby's own good that it should have better care than she could give it. When people begin to say that something is for some one's else own good, a divorce is imminent.

The landlady endured the noisy baby till her boarders threatened to leave; then she handed Maryla her passports. Maryla gathered her belongings together once more and moved on; a new wicker suit-case hanging from one arm; the new baby seated on the other and making so much commotion that a sour-voiced crier of "sweet oranges" and a raucous bidder for "recks und olt i-rin" forbore competition till the baby had passed on with its proclamation of woe.

Maryla's present plight seemed to foreshadow her whole future; she would flounder lower and lower in the world, with one arm full of freight and the other full of this baby that hated its life as much as she hated hers. She decided that the East River was a good place for both of them. A better place was one of those pretty lakes she had seen in Central Park. She started that way, but paused again. She was remembering that she had heard a neighbor at the maternity hospital speak of the basket of Sister Irene.

There was the solution of all her riddles! She stopped at a little lunch-room and persuaded the owner to keep her suit-case till she returned for it. Then she turned north on Lexington Avenue to find that magic Irenean receptacle of intolerable burdens.

The omens were good. The moment she entered the new road, the baby began to chortle and wave its hands in delight. Maryla's own feet grew light. Her eyes brightened with relief.

She sped so well that she did not heed who passed by. But at length she made out ahead, waving and smiling at her, a pale, frail little woman whom she had not seen for almost a year. It was Balinsky's wife, Miriam. Maryla's last view of her face had impressed it upon her as the very mask of despair.

As the two so contrasted mothers approached, Maryla was musing upon what strange officers fate chooses for its businesses. If she had not interceded for Rachel Balinsky she would not now be the ruthless victim of a ruthless sin.

Miriam explained in Yiddish that she had just been to see her daughter, who was getting well in the hospital where the wonderful Dr. "Voiteen" had placed her after the order came from the "Praysidunt" commanding the thieves and child-stealers and murderers on Ellis Island not to send Rachel back by Rossia, but to set her free in New York. And now Michal Balinsky was working by chickens in a grand store on Grand Street, and Rachel was in a hospital finer as a temple of Solomon.

Miriam was so rhapsodic with her own history that she had hardly seen the child asleep on Maryla's arm. At last she asked whose baby it was that Maryla was carrying, and was she a nurse by millionaires yet. Maryla could not control her color or her eyes, and Miriam knew that the baby was hers.

Miriam cried out that she had not heard of Maryla's

marriage, and demanded to know who was the lucky gentlemans. Maryla could not disguise the fact that she was not married. Such a horror was so rare in Miriam's ken that she almost fainted. She stood wringing her hands and whispering many a "*Weh, weh! vidu! oi oi! oh weh!*"

It angered Maryla to stand there and attract the attention of loiterers and be wept over. Some rankling desperateness led her to deal a finishing blow:

"I go by Fountlink Hospidal and give thees bebby to the Chreestians. It is Chreestian bebby."

Miriam clawed her and belabored her with prayers against such atrocity, but Maryla wrenched her arm loose and hastened on. She glanced back and saw the ugly little ramshackle wretch staggering down the street.

Maryla had heard that Miriam had been pretty once; she had given her life and her looks to her daughter, and her daughter had become imbecile, and brought nothing but terror and poverty and despair to her mother.

She was a nice one to advise a young girl to cling to her child through thick and thin! Who had profited by her martyrdom? The father had tried to kill himself, the mother was a wraith, the daughter a pitiful ruin. If that was God's way of rewarding devotion, Maryla decided that she would be doing her child a kindness by putting it out of her own reach.

There was no beauty in this thought, but there was strength, and Maryla finished her journey in a grim calm. At Sixty-eighth Street she found the home of Sister Irene's basket. An architect would have shuddered at the building, but to Maryla it was a beautiful city of refuge on a high hill of safety.

The immense institution that fills a whole square now had indeed grown out of the basket Sister Irene set outside her door in West Twelfth Street nearly fifty years before. At that time good folk still clung to the horrible

fallacy that the way to keep people from crime was to treat them cruelly after they committed it. Sister Irene believed that she might save a few unwilling mothers from thrusting their unwelcome intruders back into the Everywhere out of the Here *via* the rivers or the ash-barrels, if she provided a more fitting place for the tender bodies and a beginning instead of an ending to their lives.

The basket became so harrowingly popular an institution that a special building was erected and enlarged again and again. At length the city of New York came to the aid of the Sisters of Charity.

Mother Manhattan, which callow novelists and fireless poets love to rubber-stamp "the modern Nineveh," the "New Babylon," gave more and more of her funds to the Sisters till the usual annual dole had reached three hundred and sixty-eight thousand dollars. The baby that Maryla brought to the vine-fronded door was the sixty-one thousand two hundred and nineteenth child it had received on the mother's own terms.

But by the time Maryla arrived a change had taken place. The mystic fame of the basket had spread afar, and from all parts of the virtuous provinces and from overseas as well, a horde of veiled mothers hastened to present the vicious metropolis with their children.

At last the basket was removed from the outer arch to the vestibule inside, not because the city and the Sisters wished to rob any desperate woman of the privilege of leaving her impossible baby there and departing unidentified; but because the first of industries, the manufacture of human milk, could not keep pace with the need. Even the big city could not provide breasts enough to feed the wards that would not prosper on the bottle. The multi-mammate Ephesian Diana herself would have faltered before the onsets of such a Lilliputian host.

When Maryla arrived she hesitated outside a while, then peered within and saw the little white wicker bassinet,

ribboned and canopied in white, waiting in the hall. She stole in timorously and bent over, and was just unloading her arms of the sacrifice when she was approached by a gentle woman in a quaintly frilled glazed bonnet and a voluminous black robe. Maryla whirled on her like a caught thief, but she was kindly bespoken and invited to a conference.

Surges of shame incarnadined the girl's shivering flesh, and she was fain to break free. But gentleness builds firmer barriers than steel, and she listened perforce, not to commands or rebukes, but a plea that she help the city to care for her baby and herself.

The pale-faced, white-haired virgin who had never borne a child, and yet mothered three thousand children every year, knew more of motherhood than any mere mother could know, because she had known all the sorts of mothers, and multitudes of each sort. Herself anonymous for the sake of charity, she aided these other anonymous ones.

She had seen from her high white lighthouse what storms of love and fear and hate sweep the human heart and what wrecks they strew. She did not condemn from where she was, but kept the lamp alight and announced the reefs.

She beamed upon the baleful eyes of Maryla, and said: "My child, if you can't afford to take care of your baby—and such a pretty one it is, isn't it?—won't you stay here with it? Make this your home so that the little thing can have its mother's milk and its mother's love till it is strong enough to be left, or taken with you? Perhaps you could even help us by feeding some other little hungry child whose mother is dead or—or lacking in sustenance for her own."

Maryla was almost persuaded, but a gust of wildness flung her heart out of its course. She rebelled against immuring herself here as the nurse of Perry Merithew's child. Why should he go free among luxuries while she

consigned herself to this Christian prison? She shook her head in sullen refusal.

The Sister murmured a warning appeal: "If you won't take care of your own, my dear, do you realize that you will have to give it up entirely—to be nursed by some other woman? And by and by somebody will come along and adopt it for her own and give it another name? Some other woman whom God has not blessed with a baby as He has you? You wouldn't want that, would you?"

It is dangerous to ask a question that can be answered by a Yes or a No, for then the mind has but to toss a penny and speak the word that falls first on the lips. So now Maryla in a sudden ferocity of defiance, and with a reversion to earlier dialect, cried out:

"Yes! It is jost what I want it! Thees bebby is not my bebby! I did not esk it! I did not choosse thees bebby! It does not want me. All the time it cries—cries—cries! God did not sent me thees bebby. I was bad and a mans was bad, and he goes away and bebby comes. If some other woman wants it to have thees bebby, she should have it, but not me. By me, she is sick all the time. She is not heppy. She dies soon or she grows up bad like me."

The Sister had met hundreds of women in just such a mood. Every day there was some Maryla here, in a strange tangle of selfishness, altruism, revolt, collapse, hysteria, and cold logic. Often the frenzied creatures wrenched themselves free from their young as if they tore apart the invisible umbilical cord of tradition, only to find, when they were free, that their own hearts were bleeding themselves out through the wound. The next day, or the next week or month, they crept back and begged to be re-employed at the mother-job in the vast dairy of life. She had such a hope of Maryla.

And so, without further debate, the Sister sent for one of the blank forms in which the great surrender of the in-

dividual to the community was so coldly and dreadfully legalized:

> I, ———— mother of a ———— infant child aged, ———— named, ————, born at———— do hereby surrender and entrust to The New York Foundling Hospital, for the period of life, the entire management and control of such child, and do hereby assign to and invest said Corporation with the same powers and control over said child, as those of which I am possessed.
>
> Dated, New York, ————, 191——
>
> Witness————————————
>
> ————————————

Maryla read it with vague understanding and shivered before its chill. Yet she was so distraught with her many shames that she welcomed this one more. No one else could despise her as she despised herself, and she saw a kind of penance in pulling this final ignominy upon her head.

And, also, there was a secret relief in escaping the solemn endless duties of her motherhood. Like the wanton Christina of Sweden, she signed away the glory of the crown in order to be free of its weight.

There was some confusion about Maryla's name. When the Sister asked for that, Maryla answered, "Maryla—Maryla—" and hesitated.

What was her name as a mother—Sokalska or Merithew? To give the former would be to smirch her father's honor; to give the latter would be to betray Merithew. And she could not make up her mind to dignify or to disgrace him so far.

The Sister, mishearing the unusual name and thinking that the girl was of French extraction or wished to pre-

tend to be, repeated and wrote, "Marie La—" and waited. At length she said:

"Marie La—what? La Forge? La Place? La Croix?"

Maryla chose the last. "Marie La Kvah," she said. The Sister smiled sadly. The choice of names grew difficult when it recurred by the thousandfold. She accepted Maryla's *nom de mère*, and wrote in the spaces that the child was "female"; aged "two weeks"; named "Marie," and "born at New York." And she dated it June 9, 1914.

Then she invited Maryla to sign, and exchanged the pen for the baby. She pretended not to notice the surprise Maryla showed at the spelling of her own name, or the slow, palsied scrawl with which she copied it.

After all, what is life but the signing of an assumed name to a form in which we may fill only a few blanks?

When the supreme abdication was signed, the Sister took the pen to witness the signature. Maryla offered to relieve her of the child while she wrote, but the Sister shook her head and smiled, and said, "No, no; the baby belongs to me now."

This crucial test almost broke Maryla's resolution, as the sly saint hoped it would. It had melted other fierce souls. Maryla's eyes blazed with jealousy and with alarm at the response the fickle child made to the stranger's caress, and with scorn of the Sister's unfruitful spinsterhood. Maryla's bosom and her loins were wrung with longing to recall their own.

But she struck her hand across her eyes to shut out the angelic temptation and, turning, ran away.

CHAPTER LI

THE Sister's guess was true. Having given up her child, Maryla became the prey of unceasing remorse. She wept, put out her arms, resolved to go back and rescue the child or shut herself in with it. But she thought, also, of the folly of forcing her head into the heavy yoke she had escaped. She thought of the hardships the child must undergo.

She fought the decision out alone, as people fight out everything. Her soul digested this problem as her body digested its food, resisting and overcoming the poisons it contained, gaining strength from the battle. Maryla did not kill herself, nor die of grief or shame. She did not sink into a life of evil on the streets.

But the need of money drove her to action. She returned to Dutilh's, and said: "I am well now. I should be glad to woik once more by your shop."

There was a ferocity now in her beauty in place of the old meekness, and Dutilh made no difficulty about taking her into the fold again. In fact, he took her in, although he had discharged other girls. The dull season was beginning for him, and he was about to go abroad to ransack the foreign fashions.

He fled again from Maryla's efforts to explain. He was afraid to hear either her truth or her lies. His business was designing and selling beautiful clothes to make women more beautiful or less homely. He avoided as best he could the ugly thoughts and the facts that do not drape life gracefully. He told Maryla to "shut up and get busy."

The days were filled with grace and color and the light chatter of people who did not know Maryla's tragedy. But the evenings and the nights were crucifixions. She beat her aching breast and cried for her baby and for a home to keep it in. She understood what her mother had endured, and she longed to go back to her.

She imagined that Miriam Balinsky had carried home the news of her wickedness, and she was appalled to think how her deed would look through her father's eyes. But she never dreamed that he had been so moved as to declare her dead and to perform the rites of the ancient ceremonial.

He slashed the lapels of his coat to indicate the rending of garments, and strewed ashes upon his head, and cut his beard, and fasted, and devoted seven days of mourning to her memory.

When at last Maryla came back from the grave she came at one of the rare times when her mother and sister were away.

Dosia had been making eyes at a young sidewalk vender of perfumed tapes, which burned with a helpful odor. He wanted her to go to a movie show. Her father had proclaimed that the cinematographic palaces were anterooms to perdition, but Dosia had cried till he let her go for the sake of peace. Rosa was called out by the illness of a cousin in Forsythe Street. Pasinsky escorted her. Adam was left alone, save for the old, old man, who did not count.

Poor Sokalski could not understand wherein he had sinned and earned his unusual shame. He had toiled without rest; he had drunk no liquors; had never gambled nor swerved from fidelity; he had kept his food kosher; he had taken his children to the temple; he had held the ceremonies at home afterward; he had guarded his flock from evil sights and companions; and he had taught them to labor and not to squander. Yet his beloved Maryla had risen from her place and hastened to

evil. Her feet had run to take hold on hell. Perhaps he was punished because of his pride in her and his too great love of her. And now she was dead, and he had mourned for her, would for ever mourn for her.

Then Maryla came home. She knocked at the door. Adam opened it. He did not move. He stared at her as if she were a ghost, and he did not believe in ghosts.

Maryla stammered: "Can I see mamma a minute once? And Dosia, please, papa?"

He did not answer, but he opened the door wide to let her see that they were not there.

"I'll wait, please," she said, and started forward.

He set his arm across the door like a bar. She noted then the slashing of his lapels, and that his disordered beard was shorter, and his hair. She seemed to understand.

She fell back in horror. She was dead, then? She almost believed it herself. She cowered as if the Angel of Death were in the hall with her. Her father closed the door; she heard him lock it. She was afraid to be out there in the hall with the Angel of Death. She knocked frantically on the door like a child in mad terror of the dark. She pleaded to be taken in. She might have been beating on the lid of her own coffin.

She heard some one coming up the stairs, laughing. It was none of her people. She did not wish to be found in such a state. She ran on up the steps to the roof. She would make herself dead as he wanted her to be. She would kill herself, throw herself from the roof.

The night was bewitching with June. The stars were like white tulips set out in lines on a vast lawn. They formed great letters of an unknown alphabet with an undeciphered message. The Milky Way was a bed of lilies-of-the-valley. The rusted tin of the roof was plated with silver.

Maryla was afraid of the too persuasive beauty of the winsome sky. She hurried to the edge of the roof. But

it was walled on three sides. She could have dropped off into the rear court, but she did not want to die in that horrible place.

She whipped out her hat-pin. It was a fitting stiletto, since he had given it to her. She put the point over her heart, but she could not nail it home.

The breeze across her shoulder seemed to plead teasingly, ridiculing her melodrama with a tender mocking "Ooh! Ooh!" It had the merry eloquence of Perry Merithew. Everything was unimportant except to rejoice in life.

The hat-pin fell from her hands. If Perry had been there she would have flung her arms about him. She longed to be surrounded by the arms of love. She flung up her hands to the sky for help. The moon regarded her with indifference, its face tilted a little to the side. The breeze blew kisses on the nape of her neck and twitched at her hair amorously and ran away. She panted with loneliness. But no help came, nor any promise of companionship.

She pushed the hat-pin slowly back through her hat and went down the stairs and passed the door of her home without pausing. She threaded the crowds in the streets, climbed a north-bound car, and went back to the hall bedroom of her new boarding-house, where no one knew who she was or what her life had been.

The next morning she went to Dutilh's again, and every morning. And there Muriel Schuyler found her when she came back at last from Europe.

CHAPTER LII

MURIEL'S mother had planned to spend the season of June and July in London, but Muriel issued a declaration of independence and secession. She had had enough of Europe for the time being, and she declared that she would not miss the international polo games at Meadowbrook for all the world.

She loved polo and had played the game herself on Long Island with impetuous horsemanship, though her malletry was irregular and she had raised welts on several skulls, masculine and feminine. Winnie Nicolls would carry to his grave the scar of a clip she gave him over the eye, but he insisted that his heart was more deeply bruised by her careless beauty.

Winnie Nicolls was a candidate for the position of Number Three on the American team. He wrote Muriel that he had no chance of making it unless everybody else was knocked senseless, but she did not read that part of his letter to her mother. The mere hint of a desire on Muriel's part for a glimpse of Winnie Nicolls was enough to send her mother scurrying back to America. She felt that if she could see Muriel wed to so nice a boy with a fortune so supreme she could fold her hands and grow old comfortably.

But Winnie Nicolls's skill as a polo-player and his gifts with a whippy stick were the least of the attractions America held forth to Muriel. Her emotions were a *ragoût* of homesickness, patriotism, recrudescent conscience, European ennui, and curiosity as to the true sentimental condition of Dr. Clinton Worthing.

They still exchanged occasional letters, but the inter-

vals between had lengthened and the tone had grown more and more formal. Their first correspondence had been lengthy, and fire had been played with perilously. The fire had seemed to die from lack of fuel, and Worthing had told himself that he had lived down his folly.

But so the tree said as the winter came on and it shook off its foolish leaves and faced the wintry blasts under bare poles. And yet when spring came again it found the old foolishness returning in the guise of all wisdom and it put on new leaves and blazed with green bravery.

It was thus with Worthing when he received a letter from Muriel. It was posted in New York, and it said:

DEAR CLINTON WORTHING,—I've just got home, and I'm dying to see you and talk over old times. Do come up and have tea, won't you? Thank you so much! At five to-morrow, then.

Yours hastily, MURIEL S.

She had written "Schuyler" in full, then crossed all of it out but the initial. She had drawn her pen through that once.

The young man felt the letter as warm in his hands as if it were the first robin with a live coal in the rusty tongs of its wings.

The next day he dressed him in his best and approached the Schuyler home with all trepidation. He was afraid of the street, he was afraid of the entrance, he was afraid of the steps and of the door-bell. He had called there once before, nearly a year ago, for one of her tea-parties. The hostess had stayed away and the guest had not got in.

But he was not turned away this time. Muriel had been watching for him from a window whose famous carvings were starred in the Baedeker of the United States. She did not wait to have his card brought to her; he had hardly surrendered his hat when he heard the patter of her feet on the vast marble stairway.

She paused a moment, poised as if for flight, then came running down with both hands outstretched. It was to him as if the Winged Victory of Samothrace had come to life and was hurrying down the steps of the Louvre. Muriel lacked the wings, but the head and arms were a more than fair exchange.

The eagerness of her welcome and the gust of her approach unsteadied him, and when they sat taking tea in the library he did not know what he was drinking, unless it were ambrosia.

She helped his folly by resuming that meek sit-at-your-feet attitude of hers, a curious mixture of impudence and homage.

The upshot of her chatter was that they were to resume at once their combined attack on the misery of New York; and before the summer was over they were to heal all the sick, straighten all the crooked, reunite all parted, and enrich all the poor.

They were just beginning on the details when Winnie Nicolls arrived and turned Worthing's nectar to gall. The men recognized each other as partners in the wild and vain pursuit of Muriel and her kidnappers. It looked as if they had begun another pursuit.

Nicolls had his car outside, and he had come to take Muriel out to Piping Rock for dinner. He offered to drop Worthing wherever he wished to be dropped. Worthing did not wish to be dropped anywhere; so he retired, murmuring something about other engagements.

Muriel went to the door with him, and for an *au revoir* asked him to go in the Schuyler car to the first polo game and sit in the family box. He accepted with rapture, till he learned that he might have the privilege of watching Nicolls play. And then he was discomfited again. He knew that the best place to woo a woman is not in the grand stand at her side, but on the field in action before her.

CHAPTER LIII

THE polo game drew together some thirty thousand or more spectators, and such a number includes of necessity all sorts and conditions of people. Everybody was there that was anybody, or nobody, or betwixt and between. Even Red Ida Ganley was there.

Ida had soon lived up the money she had wheedled from Perry Merithew. His exit to Europe had cut off that supply, and she had spent a lean winter among the penurious cabarets of Jersey City, Newark, and Passaic.

Through the underground channels of her world she had learned that Shang Ganley had been discharged from prison for lack of evidence against him in the affair of the attempted kidnapping of Muriel Schuyler. Ida had heard that he had come forth breathing threats to get her and put her away if he croaked for it. She led a hunted life, watching every new-comer at every table, wondering if he might prove to be her fond assassin. The strain had been severe because she did not want to die.

At length she was inspired to a great plan. She managed to get in touch with Achilles Papademetrakopoulos, against whom also the ban had been raised by a politician who needed him and his gang. Ida told "Kill Papa" that she had a grand hunch. She had dreamed it, so it must be true. If Shang would let bygones remain so, she would put him in the way of a soft thing, and he could pull down a coupla thousand bucks without half trying. She implied that she was an intimate friend of a dead swell guy with a wad of cush. If Shang would

listen to reason, she would lead this guy into a little trap where Shang could get all he had.

Achilles found Shang in such a state of poverty, and hence of loneliness, that even his wife's company was desirable. The very mention of money was an atonement and reconciliation. He had missed Ida sadly, particularly of Saturday nights, when she had been wont to bring in her wages. He consented to forgive her.

So Ida resumed her place as his helpmeet. When she looked for Perry, however, to play the star part in her little drama, she found him still missing, still skulking in Europe.

Shang was furious at Ida's failure to make good, and he took her for the grand tour around the room.

As Mélisande's husband disciplined her, so Shang dug his hands in Ida's copper hair and gave the floor a much-needed mopping. But, unlike Mélisande, Ida did not wail, "He loves me no more, I am not happy." Ida said: "Fer Gawd's sake leave me wool enough to do me woik in! How'm I goin' to oin any dough in a cabaret if I'm bald-headed?"

This appealed to Shang's intelligence; he flung back in her face such tufts of copper wire as he found in his hands, and told her to get busy and bring home the bacon or he'd slice up her heart and give it to the cat.

Ida rearranged what he had left of her hair, visited a corrector of black eyes, and returned to her art, working industriously at song and dance and the side-lines of her trade. And she kept her husband in the luxury he was accustomed to, against the great day of Perry Merithew's home-coming.

The polo game offered an opportunity that no pick-pocket of proper regard for business openings could let slip, unless the police issued him a personal invitation to stay away. Shang escaped this distinction, and he was among those present.

Muriel had no knowledge

rigues going on about her.

He took Ida along for various reasons. In the first place, she paid for the tickets; in the second, she was an adept dip; in the third, she would be useful as a recipient of what he might snatch. And in the fourth, he believed that an indulgent husband should occasionally give his wife a bit of recreation—not enough to spoil her, but enough to give him something to refer to in quarreltime as a proof of his generosity and her ingratitude.

Shang and Ida reached Westbury by the Long Island Railroad under the river. The trains were sardined with people. The roads were almost choked with automobiles, as numberless as microbes in the veins of a typhoid patient.

But there was an enforced democracy about the multitude. The most expensive cars had to be parked at a distance from the inclosure, and great folk as well as small must trudge through the dusty grass to the turnstiles.

Shang and Ida were among the box-holders. They bought theirs of a noisy person who sold according to height and reliability: soap-boxes of solid structure naturally brought more than collapsible biscuit-tins. Shang was in a hang-the-expense-it's-my-wife's-money mood; he purchased a handsome ex-tomato-box which was the envy of all the neighbors.

From this vantage-point they watched the throng flow past—rich man, poor man, merchant, chief; all the world and its women. Suddenly Ida's nails nipped Shang's arm:

"Look! There's Muriel Schuyler comin'. Who's the guy with her?"

"It's de guy we scraped off against de El pillar. Don't leave 'em lamp us."

Shang and Ida turned and pressed their faces against the wire barrier till Muriel and her family had passed. If Muriel had recognized them she would have been more frightened than they.

Close on the heels of Muriel and Worthing came Perry

Merithew, hastening to get a word with Muriel, but constantly impeded by the crowd. Him also Ida saw. She nudged Shang:

"Dat's me man. Dat's Purry Murrit'ew."

"De guy you was goin' to collect off?"

"Uh-huh."

"Well, go to it!"

"Not here."

"Here an' now! Never put off to tuh-morra de guy you kin do tuh-day." He emphasized the proverb by bunting her off the box, almost upon Perry's toes. Ida drawled, "I beg your pah-donnn!"

When Perry ignored her she said in her most refined manner, "Sa-ay, it's a wonner you wouldn' speak to a fella."

Perry was just wincing before the realization that Pet Bettany was ahead of him and waiting for him with her mother. He paused to be rid of Ida, whom he recognized at the second stare.

"Oh, how are you! I haven't seen you for ever so long. Fine day, isn't it? Glad to have seen you."

He was moving on when she checked him:

"Sa-ay, where'd you get the idea I can live on lovely weather? I gotta have a little talk with you."

Seeing him resent the threatening tone, she shifted to a whine: "It's not a hold-up; it's sumpun you got a right to be tipped off to. I done you a good toin oncet, and one good toin desoives another."

"Again?" he sighed. "Well, telephone me at— No, drop me a line at my club and I'll be delighted to call. Good-by."

He escaped without naming the club, but she knew that she could find him.

Ida returned to her spouse with the good news that she had Perry on the hook, and Shang was so overjoyed, so full of dreams of wealth, that he spared the pocketbooks of his fellow-spectators.

But he did not spare the American team, a great-hearted quartet of famous achievement but suffering an off day and an off year—which is for the good of the sport, but not for the approval of the sports.

Shang Ganley, however, like thousands of other good Americans who had never seen a polo game before, felt personally affronted by every bit of bad luck, by every bad guess, and he yelled through the wire criticisms that made up in virulence for what they lacked in information.

It was baseball on horseback to Shang, and he was as typically bloodthirsty as any fan at the old Polo Grounds where polo was never played.

The people in the more exclusive inclosures were no less excited. Muriel was frantic. She had Worthing's arm black-and-blue from clutching him in tense moments following a throw-in or some neck-and-neck race down the fields with mallets like anxious antennæ.

When an American hooked out a ball from a mêlée and fed it to a compatriot, and he to another, and he swinged it in a white rainbow of hope to the goal-posts, she pounded her father's shoulders raw and hugged and kissed her mother.

When one of the diabolically ubiquitous Englishmen turned up in the wrong place and with a back-handed scoop sent the ball back through the shuttling legs of the joyous ponies, then she mourned as for some ineffable loss. If the liberty of the nation had been involved she could hardly have felt the struggle more crucial.

Between chukkers there was some visiting. The Schuyler box was in the front row and Winnie Nicolls, who was in uniform as a substitute, kept leaning on the rail to deplore the rotten luck.

Perry haunted the Schuyler vicinage. He loved Muriel in her open-air mood and she offered complete contrast with the others of his fancy. But those others seemed to haunt him.

He saw Maryla in one of the slow-moving columns. Her eyes burned upon him fierceness; he could not translate whether it were love or loathing. Then he decided that it could not be she. Her copper hair was hidden under a splendid and expensive hat, and her costume was prematurely fashionable. He did not know that she had gone back to Dutilh's or that Dutilh sent out his models to such events in his best wares, exquisite sandwich-women without placards.

While he was loitering about the Schuyler box Aphra Shaler sauntered past with an elderly innocent in tow. She glared at him with unmitigated hatred, and her girlish lips spat at him a whispered curse that amused him immensely.

Pet Bettany waylaid him, too. She had seen him talking with Red Ida and she was full of cynical questions, which he evaded by a quick comment:

"What, in God's name, have you done to your hair? You've painted it, haven't you?"

"Yes," she said.

"Why? You belong among the brunettes. I don't like you in copper."

"You don't like me, anyway. But you like your little Muriel in copper, and so does Winnie Nicolls."

"Oh, that's the way the wind sets! Well, good hunting, sister!"

Pet was desperate. She even visited the Schuyler box, where she was not welcome, because she could not otherwise get near to Winnie Nicolls. She saw the idolatry in Perry Merithew's eyes as he kept them on Muriel. Everybody saw it but Muriel. Even Aphra Shaler, sauntering past unobserved, saw it, and ground her teeth in jealousy.

Muriel had no knowledge of the intrigues going on about her. All that was important to her was that her beloved nation was losing a great historic battle. She did not dream, nor did any one there, that all of these foreign cavaliers so fiercely pursuing this rolling white

pellet would shortly be facing the screaming black shells in a polo game of nations.

Toward the last of the game, when it was evident that the brave rally of the American team was likely to be in vain, Muriel groaned:

"It's a bad year for our poor old country. They've taken our polo cup, and our tennis cup, and the golf cup. We've only got the *America's* cup, and the fourth *Shamrock* is after that."

"And I'll bet she carries it back," said Perry.

Winnie Nicolls had been one of a syndicate to build a defender of the venerable old beaker. He said: "I'll take that bet for any sum you want to lay."

"You're on," Perry sighed. "I'll go you a thousand. It's the only thing I can do for my country, because I always lose."

He neither lost nor won that bet, for the undreamed-of Servian - Austrian - German - Russian - Belgian - French-English-Turkish war sent the yacht-race agley along with countless other human schemes. Perry Merithew would not have been there, anyway, because, before there was any world war, a private war of his own had left him dead on the inglorious battle-field of a slum roof, with eight little tufts of copper-colored hair in his clutch.

That hair at present was under the hat of one of the women at the game, her only excitement now in the two rival riders galloping like Siamese twins on Siamese ponies, both yearning forward in frenzied emulation for the tiny dusty willow planet that scudded eagerly across the green in perfect obedience to whichever mallet smote it last. It might have been the white soul of a woman who meant well, but went where the whacks of destiny shot her among the hoofs of the ponies of the gods playing polo.

CHAPTER LIV

WHEN a bad man like Perry Merithew makes up his soul to become a good man, he is apt to find that he must first do a number of deeds that he would have thought far beneath him before. For there are many things that wicked people hold very dear, but good people must cast aside.

So, going on up higher, good people feel themselves far above the doing of many things which they call cruel and inhuman among themselves, but which they freely accept as permissible and even adorable in the gods.

Perry Merithew was fascinated less by Muriel's beauty than by her wholesomeness. He wanted to keep her good. Her goodness was of the only sort that could interest him. She was athletic, foolhardy, flippant, fashionable, laughterful, quick-tempered, and domineering. Perry felt no desire to flirt with Muriel. So far as he could tell, she had never tried to flirt with him. He regarded her as sacredly as he could regard anything or anybody, and the love of her made him solemn. The worst of this was that the moment he grew solemn he bored her and she dropped him. He felt that he could only keep her by marrying her. But he could only marry her by freeing himself from his old ties, vicious and virtuous.

His wife was a decided obstacle of the latter sort. He had failed to shake her off by his years of disloyalty. How could he hope to frighten her by turning good?

This Mercutio was developing into a very grave man with all these profound thoughts. One thing was sure:

he was weary of his old ways. A cynic might have said that the whole change in his heart was mere fatigue with worn-out amusements, and that he was less in love with virtue than fed up on vice.

Monogamy, indeed, however often called monotony, has never proved more tiresome than life on an eternal merry-go-round. It was King Solomon who had the most women who found life the vainest. For all mistresses are the same mistress in new dresses and new moods, as all wines are the same alcohol, all banquets the same bill of fare twisted.

When a man is seen ordering ice-water and guzzling milk with relish, it may be no proof at all of a reformation or a wholesome appetite; it may be evidence solely that he is so unused to them that they have a wicked tang or that they are a mere remedy to his fever.

In any case, here was Perry Merithew obsessed by a longing for Muriel Schuyler. He wanted to make her his less than he wanted to make himself hers. He was convinced that he wanted to be good. He yearned to win Muriel Schuyler, not by dragging her down to his level, but by dragging himself up to hers.

If the scramble aloft involved kicking several old friends in the face, the best he could do for them was to call out, "Look sharp, below there!" and, "So sorry!"

The first victim of his upward effort had been Maryla Sokalska, who had been the last victim of his old psychology. He was not proud of his treatment of Maryla, but he was glad to be free of her. He assumed that Maryla was a closed chapter in his memories, and he trusted that he could delete certain others of his *dramatis personæ* as readily.

First, there was his once-beloved and all-too-faithful wife. She had long ago given up storming at Perry. She had almost recovered from caring, though the dreary ache of her pride awoke in the depths when she heard of some

latest escapade of his, when she realized that everybody realized that she was ill-treated.

That is the ugliest, meanest part of the business of infidelity, the loneliness and the contempt or pity it bestows on the neglected partner.

Mrs. Merithew could not bring herself to the consolation of playing the same game and matching intrigue with intrigue. She had a son growing up, and he was growing away from the home, too. He had reached the age when he would fall heir to the same temptations that had governed his father's life. She saw in the young man the graces that had made Perry so fascinating, made his delicate brutalities forgivable. She was afraid for the boy and she could not find a way to protect him from life.

An early marriage for love would not guarantee him. Perry had married her for love, and it was not long before he had found "Home, Sweet Home" the tritest and stupidest of tunes.

Mrs. Merithew felt aged and terrified and no less forlorn because the desert reef where she was marooned was one of the most comfortable summer homes on Long Island. She could not keep Perry Second even there; he preferred New York in spite of its heat, and she feared that he was pursuing some of the pretty tradespeople who use musical comedy as a place of advertisement. So Mrs. Merithew made an excuse to stay in town except over the week-ends.

She was in a panic concerning her son, and longing for help, when her butler rejoiced her heart by saying that her husband had telephoned that he would be dining at home. She decided that Heaven had answered her prayers and sent her prodigal back to her aid. She hurried off to a coiffeur and had her hair remodeled in the latest school of architecture. She ordered everything that Perry best liked to eat and drink, and she took from the lavender of memory the little smiles and expressions that had once delighted him.

Perry was very gracious at the table and she thought

that the three of them made rather a fine family group. But the young man treated his father with a comradeship in cynicism that made her blood run cold. Her one consolation was that Perry rebuked him, and read him a moral lecture of a sobriety that astounded Mrs. Perry. But it left the junior Perry smiling broadlier than ever, and when Perry finished his Polonial sermon the young Laertes winked at him and said:

"That's good old home stuff, Pop, and you read it better than you could if you meant it." He rose and went to his mother's chair. "Good night, little girl. I must leave you, but beware of this interesting stranger."

He kissed his mother, winked again at his father, and escaped to some mysterious engagement.

Perry and Mrs. Perry looked at each other in despair. Perry was the more shocked of the two. They adjourned to the drawing-room, where they sat at the open window in the dark, listening to the lazy hoof-beats of a dawdling hansom horse or the occasional groan of a motor-horn on the sparsely frequented Avenue.

Perry sent many yards of pale-blue ribbon from his cigar out on the warm air before he found courage to say:

"I want to have a little serious talk with you, my dear."

"I'm listening."

"I've been a rotter to you and I'm well aware of it. I'm going to turn over a new leaf and settle down."

The candle that he lighted in her heart he snuffed out at once.

"You've been a brick. You've stood more than you have any reason to stand and you've taken punishment like a soldier. I'm not going to punish you any longer. You're too sick of the sight of me to want me round the place again. I've piled up more grudges than you could ever forget. So I'm going to give you the only gift in my power—your freedom."

He thought he heard a little gasp of protest, and he

hurried on: "You're young and beautiful, and you've a right to your place in the sun. You take a divorce and go your way, and I'll go mine. You're richer than I am, but I'll make a settlement on you that will put you up among the pictures. And I'll set aside a fund for the boy. It won't leave me much, but I'll manage with it or go to work and earn something to take its place. What do you say?"

She said nothing at all, but he heard her crying softly in the dark. He was touched, and he reached out to seize her hand. If only that touch could have thrilled him as once it had! He drew his chair close to her, and she wept on his shoulder, sobbing:

"I don't want a divorce. I want you. I want my home."

He patted her farther shoulder as one would pat a faithful old sick hound, and he said: "But I can't give you myself, my dear. A man can't do what he ought to do. At least I can't. When I find out that there's something I ought to do, it becomes impossible. I'm sorry. I'm ashamed. But how can I help it? Life's a nuisance, and I wish I were dead."

"Don't say that!" she pleaded with superstitious panic. "You mustn't say that. Something might happen."

She clung to him and kept his arm about her, but he sat glowering. He felt angry at himself, yet angrier at her, and angriest at life. A passer-by seeing their blended shadows would have thought them lovers.

It would have simplified everything divinely if they could have returned to that blessed estate. But their embrace was a burlesque, for their souls could not reach each other. He was a man that lived and loved on thrills, and she could not thrill him. Almost any other woman in his arms would have stirred some warmth in his heart, even an ugly one; for if all cats are gray in the dark, all women were pink to Perry Merithew. Even his wife

would have been if he had not known her name. But because she had a right to his fire and the only right, she was the only one who froze his soul.

He hated himself for this more than she did, but even his wrath did not kindle him. It made him sick.

It was Perry's nature to grow frantic with restlessness when he was not happy. He endured his wife's devotion for a few minutes, then he felt a womanish desire to tear his hair, a mannish desire to run away from gloom.

He broke his wife's clasp and paced the floor, saying: "It's no use. Blame me all you will, but I can't be happy here, and I can't make you happy. There's a chance for us both if you'll let me go. I want to do the right thing by you, but if we stay married I'll go on as I have, only worse. If you let me go I'll be as sober as a judge."

Her answer was a dismal little chuckle: "No, Perry, no! I know you better than you know yourself. Better than that other woman does, too. If she's your kind you'll tire of her quicker than you tired of me. If she's honest—and I don't see how she can be and accept your attentions—you'd break her heart as you did mine. I ought to let you marry her just out of revenge, I suppose, and I might if it weren't for the boy. But he's going to have a home, and at least a nominal father as long as you live. So if you're going to settle down, settle down to that. Now go tell her so. Good night!"

CHAPTER LV

PERRY went glumly from the house, cursing, as bad people do, the inconceivable wickedness of the good. He walked rapidly down the Avenue, swinging his light stick with fury. The Avenue was lonely and dark as a small town street. He felt the need of lights and life. He remembered that he had promised "Red Ida" Ganley that he would meet her at Madison Square Garden.

She had run him down by telephone that day, and he had consented to see her because it was easier to make and break a promise than to refuse her insistence. He had not the faintest intention of keeping the engagement, or of ever seeing her or her sort again.

But he was in a fume of discontent. He had planned to run straight. He had tried to do the right thing by his wife, and she had refused him the little favor of a divorce. How could he run straight if she clung to him?

He was sick of good women already. They had no sense. They did not understand the world. He would have nothing more to do with them.

He whistled to a taxicab and stepped in, telling the driver to take him to Madison Square Garden. At that time the huge arena was given over to dancing under the auspices of the amazing Castles, whose Castle House had not sufficed to provide space for the maxixe mania.

He found Ida waiting. He did not notice that she left the side of a young thug to run to him. He checked his hat and stick and took her into his arms for the dance that was pouring from the band.

Ida was dressed in a quaint burlesque of the latest

fashion, and her hair was piled up on her head like a battered copper kettle turned upside down. She was so small that Perry saw mostly her hair. He decided that it had been born plain red, but had been tampered with. She danced well in a common cabaretish way, and her vulgarities of speech amused him more than better diction could have done at the time, for he was in a rebel mood.

Perry was not addicted to alcoholic refuges. Where other wastrels would go out and get drunk, he would seek a flirtation. He laughed at Ida for a while, and recognized with smiling contempt that she was trying to coquet with him. He said:

"What would that ferocious husband of yours think of your flirting with me?"

"Me floit?" said Ida. "It 'd soive him right if I was to take up with you poimanent."

Perry winced at the thought, but he answered, with the grace of the complete courtier, "That would be too much to hope."

"Say, are you stringin' me?" said Ida. "I ain't quite got your number yet."

"I doubt if I have one," said Perry.

"Everybody's got a number and a goat," said Ida, to whom yesterday's slang was to-day's classic. "Your number is thoiteen if I don't wise you up."

"Then for Heaven's sake wise me quick," said Perry, who was tiring of her paucity of charm. "You said something about an important secret or something. I don't want to hurry you—but I have another engagement."

"You got a date to take a ride in a hoise if you don't listen tuh me," said Ida.

"A hearse! Ugh!" Perry mocked. "Save me! Save me!"

But Ida, with a sudden shudder that startled him, muttered: "Keep on dancin', but woik your way round to the door. We gotta beat it. He's here lookin' for me.

I don't think he's sor me yet, but he's lookin' the bunch over."

"And who is he?" said Perry.

"Where can we go where we can have a talk without nobody distoibin' us?" said Ida, evasively.

"That is a problem," said Perry, warily. "I could hardly take you to my club."

"You couldn't come to my flat, could you? or could you?"

"I'm afraid not," said Perry, with great positiveness. Then he remembered that a taxicab was a convenient place for uninterrupted conferences. He suggested this, and Ida agreed heartily. He collected his hat and stick and they entered a taxicab. He told the chauffeur, "Just drive around," trusting him to know where that was.

A policeman in plain clothes, recognizing them both, took a step in their direction, but decided not to interfere. He made a mental note that if Perry Merithew sent in an alarm that he had been robbed, he would hunt at once for Red Ida, the well-known "dip." And he set the gossip going in select police circles that Perry Merithew must have lost his mind or, worse yet, his money, to be taking up with a cheap crook like Ida Ganley.

But here he was in taxi-communion with her. Ida was eager to know how a swell guy like he was made love to a dame. The situation pleased her not only as an ambitious woman eager to learn, but also as a budding dramatist.

Ida had constructed a scenario with Perry Merithew as the star. It was not her plan to put Perry Merithew into the hearse she spoke of; that would end his value. It was her scheme to use the obsolete, but never quite forgotten, badger game. Ida would entice Perry to some trysting-place, and there Shang Ganley would surprise them, play the injured husband, produce a brace of revolvers, and threaten to avenge his ruined home with a murder or two. Ida would dramatically plead for her

paramour, and Shang would slowly relent on condition that Perry paid dearly for the husband's broken heart.

The beauty of this venerable device is that the victim is the last one on earth to desire police participation, and, once caught, he can be levied on again and again. He is as good as a bond with coupons to cut off every six months.

Ida was in love with the plan. The only difficulty had been to lure her prey to her lair. That, as she had told Shang when they discussed the production, would not be easy.

"That's some job, believe me!" she had said. "That 'll take a bit of loorin'. A swell bear-cat like him ain't goin' to fall for no cheap bunk. Well, 's I 's sayin', I woim me way into Purry's confidunce by warnin' him of a turrible plot. He'll be turrible grateful. Maybe he'll offer me money, and if he does I'll spoin it."

"O Gawd!"

"I know how it hoits," she said, "but, in the foist place, it would simpully roon everything if he suspicioned anything. In the second place, are we playin' for big stakes, or are we pikin'?"

"They can't come too big for me," Shang murmured, with glittering eyes. "If he was to spill a million in me mit it wouldn't meet me expenses."

"Ah, cut out the powder-woiks," Ida growled. "If ever you was to see a hunderd dollars all at once you'd go blind. You leave Purry Murrit'ew tuh me, and try to be on time when I send for you and speak your piece like I loined it to you and throw a good scare into him."

And now the first step in her campaign was achieved. Ida had lassoed her prey and she was ready to throw the scare into him. Perry did not take advantage of the opportunity to make love to Ida. His first remark was:

"And now the secret, please."

"Well, listen," Ida began, with a sigh. "You know I

put you hep to the kidnappin' of Miss Schuyler." He nodded. "And all I got out of it was a few plunks. Well, what me husband gave me was the pirtiest little beatin' up a lady ever took off anybody. O' course I swore I never split about the kidnappin', but he lays it up against me, and still more he lays it up against you."

"How did he find out I was concerned in it?" Perry asked. "You must have told him."

"Told me eye!" said Ida. "I'm liable to do that, ain't I, and get a knife in me? Some them other gunmen must 'a' reco'nized you when you held 'em up and took Muriel away from 'em. Anyway, they're on to you and they're after you."

This was not so pleasant. Perry ceased to patronize. New York has its vendetta cult as well as Sicily, and people are found dead about town with disconcerting frequency. Also, the dynamite bomb was an almost weekly punctuator of the city's calm, and it was not always confined to small shopkeepers.

Perry was no coward, but it is uncomfortable never to know where one is to be struck, by whom or when.

He said, as jauntily as he could: "And what do these gentlemen intend to do to me—kill me?"

"Oh, I don't think they'd go quite as far as that," said Ida.

"Then I needn't worry," said Perry, "so long as they don't kill me entirely. Just tell the gentlemen that I carry a revolver and I shoot quick and straight."

"Then they'd get you arrested under the Sullivan law."

"Then tell me their names and I'll have the police gather them in in advance."

"Police nothin'. There's too many in the gang. The cops can't get 'em all. Besides, what evidunce you got outside o' my woid? And I wouldn't dast go to the court. They'd get me sure, and you, too."

"Then what do you advise?" said Perry.

"You leave it to mamma. The plot ain't quite settled

yet. One of their best men ain't out o' jail till a day or two. As soon as they decide I'll know and I'll telephone you, and you meet me and I'll tell you how you can toin the whole bunch over to the cops without your name appearin'. Do you get me?"

"I'm not sure," said Perry; "but I'm sure I'm ever so much obliged to you, and if a little money would be of any use to you—"

Money is one of the hardest things on earth to say No to. But Ida was resolute. She spurned the proffer.

"But why do you do me this great favor gratis?" said Perry.

"Because—because—" Ida took refuge in popular song, "'Because I got a feelin' in my heart for you.'"

She leaned against him and lifted her face so that if he should be inclined to kiss her he would be caused the minimum of toil. Perry's generous heart could hardly ever resist such an appeal for alms. He knew that Ida was languishing for a caress, but he felt stingy. Still, he could hardly deny her some token of gratitude. He bent and printed a light glancing blow on her nearer cheekbone, and said, with forced gratitude:

"How can I ever thank you?"

Ida sighed with deep disillusionment. "And he's the guy who made love-makin' famous!"

Perry did not understand; he spoke impatiently. "I'm really infinitely obliged. I won't forget it."

"And I'll keep me eye and me ears peeled," said Ida. "And I'll let you know the minute there's anything doin'. I'll telephone you. And as soon as you've hoid from me you jump like I tell you to. If you don't, good night!"

"Good night?" said Perry "Are you getting out here?"

"No; you might take me to the Poisian Garden. I just rave over Joan Sawyer."

Perry could not refuse her so modest a request, and he told the driver to take them to the Persian Garden. He

bade Ida good night on the sidewalk. But she said that a lady could hardly go up alone. He took her up with the calm martyrdom of a gentleman. He danced with her once or twice. He saw several important people that he knew, and he abandoned Ida and fled. But here, also, a detective had seen him with Ida and was tempted to warn him against her, but decided instead to confirm the gossip already flying about the various precinct stations.

CHAPTER LVI

MURIEL was spending an unusual amount of her time in town this summer. She had been abroad so long that New York attracted her as a sort of foreign city.

The relief of one misfortunate soul always brought forward two others to relieve, and Muriel's hopes began to flag.

She was attacking the ocean with a spoon, and she was exhausting herself faster than the supply of salt water. Also she found that her accounts of her work exhausted her listeners rapidly.

One person alone never wearied of Muriel's adventures, and that was Dr. Clinton Worthing. He had only one fault to find with Muriel, and that was her father's wealth. She was as simple and sound as any middle-class girl; her costumes were not elaborate, and her jewelry, if she had any, shone chiefly in the dark, unfathomed caves of the safe-deposit vault.

But she was herself in a safe-deposit vault. She was like a princess peering through a grille and flirting with an apprentice outside. They could talk, their eyes could make love, their hands could meet, and there was the maddening possibility of kissing; the fierce danger that he might not be able always to keep his hands from embracing her through the bars and playing Pyramus to her Thisbe. But he could not drag her through the chinks of her wealth, and he could not climb through.

He used to find himself praying that some great financial earthquake might destroy the Schuyler wealth and fling the walls to the ground. But while the cruelly pro-

longed hard times were shattering other fortunes, they seemed not even to shake down a capstone from the high castle of Jacob Schuyler. They managed, however, to injure Worthing's practice and to make it hard to collect what little he could earn. People could not even afford to be ill, except on credit. So Worthing had leisure enough to cultivate Muriel.

One day he and she were coming away together from the hospital where Happy Hanigan was swearing at his apparatus and refusing to believe their latest promises that he should soon be unfettered. Hot as the day was, Muriel and Worthing walked. It absorbed so much more time. Their errancy led them into Fifth Avenue.

As Pet Bettany had said, a woman can never have clothes enough, and, though Muriel's wardrobes bulged with unworn frocks, she could not keep from pausing at nearly every window to cry out in longing for some hat or gown dangled there as bait.

Poor Worthing felt his poverty. He could not provide her with things like these, and her appetite was evidently insatiable. Before one hat perched like a cockatoo behind a shining plate-glass window she paused and wailed:

"Oh, I ought to have that hat."

"Wait till I get a rock," said Worthing.

She loved the implied sentiment more than the hat; but they passed on. Eventually in their dawdling progress they reached a window which she could not pass. It cast a net out on the sidewalk and entangled her feet. A gown hung there on a headless, armless, footless dummy. To Worthing it was simply that and nothing more. Muriel could see herself in it, alive and striding or gliding among its caressing folds.

"I'd sell my soul for that," she said. "I just must have that. It's Dutilh's shop. I have an account here, so it won't cost me anything. Come in and let's look at it."

But this was more than Worthing could undergo. He

looked at his watch and pretended a patient waiting for him. Muriel offered to postpone her visit to Dutilh, but Worthing could hardly assume to give his imaginary client absent treatment, and he regretfully stuck to his excuse.

"But I hadn't half finished my story," said Muriel. "I'll tell you. My father had to be in town this afternoon for a board meeting. He invited me to dinner with him and a dance somewhere. He's just falling in line, and it's awfully good for him. Every now and then we go over to Long Beach, have a swim and dinner, and dance all evening. He's lost tons of weight. Then we motor to our country place. You've never been there, have you? You must come out for the next week-end. Will you?"

Worthing said he would. He was almost glad that he had no patients to neglect.

"And to-night?" Muriel pleaded, as if she were asking a charity. "Will you dine with us to-night?"

He graciously consented.

"At eight to-night, then? At the Ritz. We'll dine on the roof if you like?"

He liked. They parted with a mutual gaze as elastic and as sweet as taffy long drawn out.

When Muriel walked into the clothes shop Dutilh assailed her with his usual My-Godding:

"My God! I thought you'd gone abroad again. But evidently not, for who held you while they forced you into that gown? It has a tight skirt! You ought to be ashamed to be seen in it."

"I got it in Paris."

"Yes, I saw it there, and I wouldn't let them lift it off the hanger."

Muriel was huffed a little. "I didn't buy it for you."

Dutilh laughed and rubbed his nose as if she had hit him there.

"That gown in the window," she said.

"Oh yes, the purple Premet!" Dutilh exclaimed. "I saved that for you for months, but you didn't come in."

"Oh, then it's months old."

"Trapped!"

"But I was speaking of the green one."

"Of course! The Callot! Fine! That came in yesterday evening. Just out of the customs, just unpacked. The Callot girls must have had you in mind when they invented it."

"Why didn't you save that for me?"

"I'd given you up as hopeless."

"May I see it?"

"Mrs. Shenstone!" he shrieked. "Get that Callot out of the window. Miss Schuyler wants to try it on."

"No; it's too hot for me to do all the work. Let me see it on a model."

Mrs. Shenstone hurried away with the frock and it returned on the form of Maryla, who came in as billowily as a footless mermaid.

Muriel greeted her with a flattering affection and a shattering query: "Miss Sokalska! I'm so glad to see you. And you're prettier than ever. But I heard you had left here, had come into a lot of money. Did you? I hope you didn't lose it! Did you?"

Maryla flushed. Dutilh tried to intervene. He turned to Maryla. "I told Miss Schuyler about the money when you first left." He turned to Muriel. "But you know how those things are. The amount was greatly exaggerated. So she came back. But how do you like the gown?"

"I like it enormously on Miss Sokalska," said Muriel. "The green goes with her hair wonderfully. It's like patina on an old bronze."

"Then it would suit you to perfection," said Dutilh. "Your coloring is much the same."

"Oh, Meesteh Dutilh!" Maryla protested, shocked at his venturing to equal a model with a customer.

"The honor is all mine," said Muriel.

"Will you have the gown?" said Dutilh. "Walk away, my dear, and let her see the back. A dream, eh?'

"It belongs on Miss Sokalska," said Muriel. "I'd never dare to wear it now."

This was terrible. This would never do. A model who scared off purchasers!

But Muriel said: "Will you let me buy it for you, Miss Sokalska? I meant to bring you something from abroad, but I—I forgot."

Maryla was in a panic. She had had too much of beautiful gowns. She had tried to live down to the others, but she said: "Thenk you, please, I could not live up to such a dress. I am a woiking-girl, not a fine lady."

"All the same, you ought to have it," Muriel grumbled. She disliked being thwarted in her impulses. It was her idea of charity that a woman needs pretty things now and then more than bread or shelter. She realized the difficulty, however, of forcing the gift in the presence of Dutilh. If she had Maryla alone she might succeed. She might get her a better situation than the one she had. So she said, "Well, I'll take the gown, though it's too good for me—if you'll send it home this afternoon."

"It will be there in an hour," said Dutilh, waving Maryla away.

Muriel called her back. "I want to talk with you about everything, Miss Sokalska. Won't you come up and have a cup of tea with me when you leave here?"

Maryla hesitated, but Dutilh clinched the affair. "She can take the gown to your house herself, and we'll call it a day's work. When do you want her?"

"At five?"

"At five."

Maryla arrived at the Schuyler front door with the big box under her arm. Kane, the second man, ordered her

round to the trade entrance in the area. She knew enough by now to remind him that she was a caller on Miss Schuyler.

Muriel came down, and to Kane's befuddlement treated her with distinction and ordered in tea. Maryla sat in the same majestic chair drinking tea from the same service with the same ritual as at first. But she had lived through æons of experience since then. She was not the same Maryla. Muriel had dismissed the servants with a toss of the head, and now she exclaimed:

"Now tell me all about yourself."

Maryla smiled wretchedly. That was a large order, an impossible order, too, even if one had the time and the memory and the endurance. Muriel had to fill the silence herself:

"You are looking so much better! Have you been well? Do you like the work?"

Maryla had come to the Schuyler home in a mood embittered with realization of the hateful fact that Muriel was, in a sense, to blame for all that had befallen her. She wanted to pour out, with the wrath of an ancient prophet, her horror of the ways of these rich Moabites in whose tribe a Perry Merithew could prosper. She had heard that Muriel knew the sleek monster, was friends with him. She wanted to accuse Muriel of being as bad as herself, as bad as Merithew.

But somehow hospitality has always exerted a mystic power of disarmament. Maryla had broken Muriel's tea-biscuits and tasted her sugar. And her response to Muriel's eager concern was not wrath, but love. She had longed for one thing more than revenge, and that was expression. She had famished for one listener. And now she had found one, and she felt that there would be deep wells of sympathy to her need.

She told her story in her own way, rather giving herself the worst of it, seeing her innocent motives through the ugly murk of their consequences. And she called

Perry Merithew "Meesteh Brown," as she had called him to the janitor and her maid.

Muriel listened with breathlessness. She knew that these things were frequent. She had heard and read of them in novels and stories and sermons and newspapers, in villages, countrysides, cities, American and foreign. But she had never heard a history of the sort from the lips of experience.

It was another day of début to Muriel like that one when she first invaded the realm of the very poor. Now she knew the tragic meaning of the contemptuous platitude, "Why girls go wrong."

Strangely, she did not feel disdain or repugnance. She did not feel soiled by the testimony. The dirt of life is fertile, and it washes off, and whoso is afraid to dig in it is not likely to understand the soil he springs from or the field where he grows.

Muriel ached with the burden of the long months Maryla had trudged; she flamed with her wrath at the man, this universal Mr. Brown who tarried awhile, and rode away. She was not judicial enough to absolve Mr. Brown from treachery or conspiracy or to see that he was almost as much the helpless victim of his evil impulses as the woman was. She felt a truth in the old formula that makes the man the deep-dyed villain, the spreader of snares for innocent feet.

When Maryla told how she had longed to stab her betrayer with the hat-pin he gave her, and drew it from her hat, Muriel took it from her and studied it. Its claw-gripped amethyst and its keen steel length were as dreadful as if it had done the deed it was meant for.

She put it down on the tea-table; it was still dangerous; it was romantic with menace.

As Maryla went on with her chronicle, and told how she had gone back to her home, but had been unable to breathe in its fetid atmosphere, she found in Muriel's eyes and in her little gasps of comment all imaginable sym-

pathy, until she told how she had given her baby to the city.

Then Muriel, who had never borne a child, felt all the primal antipathy for such a deed and could not mask her aversion.

Maryla cowered before the unwitting condemnation. She did not defend herself; but in a dull fury heaped reproaches on her own wickedness.

Her self-revilement forced Muriel to be her advocate.

"Oh, I'm not blaming you for what you did. You are not bad. It was not bad of you to do what you did. It was love that made you, and it was something to be proud of because you could love so well and endure so much so patiently."

It takes the innocent young to say such things. Muriel caught up Maryla's hand and tried to include herself in the sisterhood of motherdom.

Nothing could have convinced Maryla of Muriel's innocence like her pretense at knowledge and her reckless sympathy. She decided that Muriel could not be of Perry Merithew's sort, and she was glad that she had kept the man's name secret.

Meanwhile Muriel was squandering more of her enthusiasm for everything human. "But the past is over and done. It's the future that counts. And you mustn't —you simply mustn't—leave your baby to an institution. You'd never forgive yourself. You'd never know where it was. Even if it were dead you wouldn't know, but its ghost would seem to haunt you. And if it were alive you would think that you heard it calling to you for help. You can't deny your child the most precious thing in life—a mother to go to."

These were not new ideas to Maryla. She had dwelt with them ever since she consigned her child to oblivion. Muriel opened the old wounds and broke the sluices of tears anew. Maryla as she wept could only plead:

"But how should I support my baby? Where can

I woik and keep my baby? Can I pay for somebody would take care the baby when I am away woiking by dressmakers or anywhere?"

Muriel was ready for this. "The father must pay for you and the baby, too—this Mr. Brown."

"No, no, he shall not have."

"It's his duty if not his right. If you won't speak to him, I will. And I'll make him marry you."

"He married somebody else foist."

Muriel was staggered by the ugliness of this fact. "The dog! The beast! Well, then, you and I will take care of the baby without him. He has no right to it. The first thing is for you to make sure that the baby hasn't been given away to anybody else. You go claim the baby and—"

Muriel's father came into the room. He had had the stormy day of an old-school capitalist fighting the impertinent claims of the new-school publicists, who were trying to make him personally and criminally responsible for a train wreck on one of his railroads.

He was in a rage and hungry for his dinner. He was curt to Maryla when Muriel reminded him that he had met her. He was curt to Muriel. Even she could not overawe him when he was hungry. She promised to be dressed in a jiffy, and she reluctantly bundled Maryla out of the house, saying:

"Come see me, soon. And go get your baby, and I'll be responsible for it. And I'll see your father and mother again, and make everything as right as I can."

Muriel was a member of the new school, and believed in everybody's being responsible for everybody else. Maryla tried to stammer her thanks, but Muriel took her in her arms and kissed her and did what she did not do for richer callers—went to the door with her. Then she ran up the stairs to dress for the dinner and the dance. She had certainly earned them both.

Maryla, out on the sidewalk, nearly lost her hat in a

gust of evening breeze. She remembered that she had left her hat-pin on the tea-table. She was afraid to go back for it. She was glad to be rid of it. She turned toward the Foundling Hospital with a more peaceful soul.

The servants, finding the hat-pin when they took away the tea-service, supposed it to be Muriel's, and sent it up to her room, where the housemaid put it in her pin-cushion without remark.

Muriel was too busy to be spoken to. Her own maid was in the country, and everything was at sixes and sevens. She did not wear a hat when she met her father in the hall. She was trying not to breathe fast from her whirlwind change of costumes, and trying to make him think that he had kept her waiting.

They dined at the hotel because their own kitchen crew was in the country. All the way down in the car Jacob was spluttering about his business troubles.

"You'll forget 'em when they strike up the lame duck," said Muriel. "And you mustn't spoil your dinner with talking shop, for your nice young doctor is to dine with us."

"My nice young doctor?" said Jacob. "Who's my young doctor?"

"Clinton Worthing," Muriel simpered, with the ultra demurity of an old actress.

"My nice young doctor!" sniffed Jacob. "You little scoundrel! Well, I'm glad Winnie Nicolls is to be with us to-night to act as an antidote to our nice young doctor."

"Winnie Nicolls?" Muriel gasped.

"Yes; he's come on the Board now, and I asked him to join us. He's got an aunt or something in tow for me to dance with. You can tell your mother about her mysteriously, and maybe we can make her so jealous that she'll take up dancing, too. She needs it. We'll get your—my nice young doctor to prescribe it."

A sudden vicious inspiration led H

flick the ashes into Perry's eye.

CHAPTER LVII

IT was the season when over New York there seems to stand a demon of heat beating the town with a flail. During the day the only stir in the air comes from the softened pavements where he pounds up the dust. Usually, though not always, he rests at sundown and breezes come in like brooks of salvation.

This was such a night. On the roofs of the multitudinous towers that climb and climb, the lucky folk were gathered, eating or dancing, listening to music or watching the dancers. Hordes of them were visitors, but there were armies of husbands whose wives were in more seasonable places. And there were a few of the wealthy who had been kept in town or called back on some of the interests that made up their wealth.

Pet Bettany and her mother were spending the summer in town. They had no husband and father to leave at a desk, nobody to send them funds. The hard times had almost ended their revenue. They resolved to rent their summer home and hide in their town house. They could pretend that they had been to Europe—or anywhere where their friends had not been.

Even summer homes were not easy to rent in the black year of 1914. The sum the Bettanys finally had to accept barely kept them in food and forbade excursions.

If good people undergoing hardships deserve sympathy, there ought to be even more for bad people in distress, since they have not even patience or the strong support of deserving better. The Bettany women took their humiliations without humility. When Pet had seen

Merithew at the polo game she had coerced him into a luncheon rendezvous. Perry kept the engagement because he feared that Pet was planning something new against Muriel. Pet astounded him by turning up in a pathetic humor. She hurt his appetite with the sorrowful story of her privations, and she moved him almost to tears by the ravenous way she ate the unsubstantial decorative things she ordered.

"I'm so sick of bread and milk and round steaks and tinned things from impudent tradespeople, slung at us by anarchist servants who only stay with us, damn 'em, because they can't get jobs anywhere else. The only solution of the servant problem is hard times, and then it's the master problem. I want to eat a ton of *hors-d'œuvres* and a barrel of caviar and some truffles and Nesselrode pudding, and all the things I don't get at home."

Perry felt like a philanthropist at a newsboys' banquet. He resolved that he would lend her some money, after all. The up-town slums appealed to his generosity. He said, amiably, "Dancing much, Pet?"

"Dancing?" said Pet, with her mouth full, in her grand old plebeian Russian-empress way. "Who's going to take me to a dance? I've been tempted to go out and hire one of these one-stepping haberdashers to dance with me; but I haven't had the nerve—or the price."

"What would you say if I asked you to take dinner to-night with me and dance the evening out?"

"I'd call for some aromatic ammonia before I fainted."

"Would your mother have to come along?" said Perry, anxiously. "Of course I love Mrs. T. J. B., but—"

"Say no more, Perry. Let mother darling row her own hoe, or whatever they say."

When Perry called for Pet that evening he was surprised to see how fine she looked. She would have dubbed her evening gown old-fashioned, but she had

bought with such far-sighted providence that it was still a little ahead of the season.

Perry lavished compliments on her, and it is not certain that in the dusk of the cab he did not live up to his reputation better than with Red Ida.

Pet was so gorgeous that he decided to take her to the Ritz-Carlton for dinner. They could dance in a rowdier place if the spirit moved them, or in any of the expensive hotels, for the dance industry had forced them all into line.

Perry and Pet went up to the dining-room on the roof, and rejoiced in its cool richnesses. Under the striped canopy great baskets of flowers hung in profusion. And the night air streamed in across a parapet of plants in bloom. It played about with the hilarity of a jester in a throne-room. It bent the flowers double and tousled the hair of the men. It twitched the plumes in the head-dresses of the women, and it whisked impishly at their light skirts as they entered.

And at one empty table it fluttered the table-cloth so joyously that at last a thin goblet rolled to the floor and broke with a little tinkle.

Pet's spirits rose higher and higher, and Perry ordered with less than his usual delicacy, for Pet was hungry. Also thirsty. She flung his cocktail as well as her own between her riant lips. And she said:

"Make it champagne, old thing, won't you? That's the love-child! And give me a cigarette."

Perry made it champagne. A best one. It came so dry that Pet pretended to blow the dust off it. Perry, though he drank hardly a drop, began to feel the conviviality of the occasion, and people at other tables were glancing with amusement or displeasure at him and at Pet, whose strong voice was not muffled with gaiety.

And then Winnie Nicolls had to come in, with some elderly woman in convoy. Pet waved to him with an eagerness that miffed Perry. She beckoned him to come over from the large table where he had been seated.

But he bowed low and indicated his companion as an excuse for staying put.

Pet grew sullen. "Who's the old hen he's with, and why is he afraid to let her see him with me? Is it because I'm smoking?"

"I don't know—three times," said Perry.

"Am I flushed? Am I talking too loud?"

"Yes."

"Well, what do I care?" she said, louder still. Then she saw that his face had brightened suddenly. She faced about. Muriel Schuyler was coming in with her father and some young man.

Perry was disgusted at being caught out with Pet on one of her bad days, but he decided to put on a bold front. He started to rise and go to Muriel. But Pet put her hand on his arm and set him down ridiculously.

It was Winnie Nicolls that rose and motioned to Muriel, and she turned in his direction.

Pet saw this, too, and it inflamed her further. Perry tried to lift her hand from his arm, and pleaded:

"Let me go, please. I must speak to Miss Schuyler just a moment."

She would not release him. She mumbled: "Muriel Schuyler can't have all the men. If Winnie can't leave his hen, you can't leave me."

"I'll only be a moment, please," Perry urged.

But Pet had already passed the danger-point. Her cigarette caught her notice; the ashes were about to topple. A sudden vicious inspiration led her to flick them into Perry's eye.

Staring at Muriel, he did not see them coming. They filled his eyes with pain and tears, and his heart with rage.

"Oh, so sorry!" Pet laughed. "Go on to your Muriel now. I don't mind."

He could not go. He spent some awkward moments bathing his eye with his handkerchief wetted in his glass of water. His temper was gone beyond control. He

was kept winking, and he dared not look at Muriel. He lectured Pet in a low tone, and she answered him with such blatance that the waiters were in distress.

Perry saw through his inflamed eyes that Muriel was wondering, and her father annoyed. Winnie Nicolls was disgusted, and his aunt from out of town half amazed and half delighted at this confirmation of her opinion of New York manners and morals.

As soon as the miserable dinner could be served and disposed of, Perry got Pet away on the pretext of an impatience to dance. When he had helped her into a taxicab, he whispered her address to the driver.

When Pet realized that he had brought her home she made a magnificent scene, and Perry was not sure that she would not strike him in the face.

To the delight of the chauffeur, she stood at her front door and threatened Perry Merithew with vengeance dire and memorable. Perry went back to the Ritz-Carlton to make his apologies, but Muriel and her company had gone somewhere else to dance. He went to half the roofs in town before he reached the one where they had been. And by that time they had been and gone.

Worthing had been hardly more comfortable through the dinner than Merithew. He had not been yoked to a woman whose good breeding had shown poor results; but he had been encircled with money.

Jacob Schuyler was rich. Winnie Nicolls was richer, and his aunt, Mrs. Adams of Boston, was one of the plutocrats of New England. Winnie remembered Worthing, and told again the story of the vain pursuit they had engaged in when Muriel was kidnapped. But Winnie did not disguise his jealousy of him.

After the dinner they adjourned to the Biltmore to dance. Jacob and Mrs. Adams made sorry progress. Both had been learning new steps, but they had not learned the same ones, and the result was more debate

than dance. When Jacob sidled, Abigail dipped; and when Abigail pirouetted, Jacob castle-walked.

Muriel gave Worthing the first dance, and he rejoiced till he wondered if she had not done it to tantalize Nicolls. Furthermore, Jacob stopped them in mid-ecstasy and cut in, offering to trade partners. He wrested his daughter from Worthing's arms and bounded away like a galloping buffalo, for Muriel knew his rhythm. Worthing had nothing to do but offer Abigail the hollow of his arms, and to his horror she found him so congenial a dancer that she required an encore. Then it was Nicolls that laughed.

Jacob was like a boy. He had got back the dancing fever, and besides the joy of the speed and the music and the lilt there was the added promise of well-won sleep and the welcome testimony of the bath-room scales every few mornings that he had made one pound of flesh grow where two had grown before.

And so, being a monopolist by nature, he was perfectly willing to keep Muriel from the two young men, and leave them to alternate as wallflower or as first aid to Abigail.

When Jacob grew tired it was always time to go home. He tired early, since he rose early, and he was soon telling Muriel to bid her guests good night.

Winnie Nicolls tried to make an engagement with Muriel for the next day, but she said that she would be in the country. He suggested the following afternoon, but she said that her father would be motoring over to Long Beach for a swim and more dancing. Winnie suggested the still following day, but Muriel had an engagement in town at a most important charity meeting with a committee of which Mrs. Perry Merithew was chairman. Winnie gave up in despair.

Worthing made a note of that Long Beach hint, and resolved to happen to be there. The ocean still belonged to the public, and a rich man in a bathing-suit was no better than a poor man unless he were the better swimmer. And Worthing rather prided himself on his natation.

CHAPTER LVIII

PEOPLE who go down to the sea in bathing-suits alter all civilization. Everything suffers a sea change. They doff the habits that have been drilled into them from infancy, the very principles of morality. They are so used to their clothes that when they take them off they are really putting on a domino. Their own skins and limbs are a masquerade.

They check at the office their valuables, write their names on them, and reclaim them later, saying:

"Give me back my modesty, my dignity, my pride. I left with you a lively sense of the importance of concealing my ankles and knees, and a complete set of demure ideals and discreet behaviors."

Imagine the horror of a lady who found that she had lost her check or by mistake held that of some light person, or learned that her valuables had been mislaid or given away to somebody else. Imagine Mrs. Grundy coming back wet and animal, and finding that she would have to return to town as she had just come up the beach! Ponder the astounding fact that if she were to saunter along the board-walk in the garb she wore on the sand a foot away, she would ruin her reputation for life. In most of the seaside colonies she would be arrested by the blushing police if she went to her cottage, a hundred yards distant, without an enveloping mantle about her.

But on the strip of free country along the water's edge she will not be criticized, though she stroll or sprawl or run or stand in the suds and cling to a rope and bounce up and down in a jostle of total strangers. She may shriek

and cavort and splash, and no one will protest. That is what she is there for. She may bark and wallow and wiggle like a glistening seal, and nobody will say her nay. Astounding and bewildering truth that one may not do in one crowded place what one may do in another! O times! O places! O morals!

The partially and insecurely costumed faun next to Mrs. Grundy may be her parson. Only yesterday he may have (and probably had) delivered a scorching jeremiad against the indecencies of the modern fashions, the sensualities of the ball-room, or the Babylonian horrors of musical comedy where the most brazen show-girl or acrobat is hardly more exposed than wet Mrs. Grundy or himself.

But now his reverence is dressed very nearly as God dressed him and he is lauding God, who made the sea, for making it.

The parson s wife may be out yonder on the float with a bevy of dancing mergirls and kicking her manifest legs in pagan childishness. On the beach the little daughter of the minister may be screaming in the wash and trussed up as high as anatomy allows—a little human clothes-pin. The minister's elder daughter may be lolling in knee-skirts on the sand and combing her hair while she flirts with a young fellow two-thirds of whose person is covered only by a coat of sunburn.

It is hard for us to understand the Roman Saturnalia of three days, yet we have three months of it. Inconsistency has never had anything to do with virtue, and never will have; and the saint may perform to-day what the courtesan dared not do yesterday and will not dare to-morrow. For whatever everybody does is right so long as everybody does it.

These things ought to make us less ruthless in our condemnations, but they don't and won't. The scandalous are as easily scandalized as the prudes.

Mrs. Grundy, whose skirt comes an inch below her knees (when she stands still), is disgusted at the sight of Miss

Phryne, whose skirt ends an inch above the fatal patella. Rev. Dr. Dogma, whose sleeves fall an inch below his shoulders, is revolted at the young men who have no sleeves at all.

And this hilariously depraved multitude, a glimpse of whose unashamed persons would have set Cotton Mather or even Roger Williams to calling on Heaven for a shower of brimstone, was itself aghast at the newest depravity because it was new.

In the summer of 1914 the dancing mania took an amphibious form. A number of half-clad bathers, not content with walking or running or sitting or lying supine or prone along the beach, actually took to dancing together. This was the post-ultimate adventure. This was, as the Irish say, "beyond the beyonds."

But the strongest language that could have been devised was already exhausted in denouncing the tango, and before that the turkey trot, the waltz, the polka, the minuet, the very idea of dancing.

Yet the dances had waxed and waned in popularity with no regard whatsoever to the names they were called; they waxed and waned like other public whims, solely according to the great social law of novelty and fatigue. And the only moral seems to be that one should save a superlative or two for a rainy day.

Spendthrift moralists, who had worn out all the indecent nouns and adjectives in rebuking people who danced indoors on floors, had nothing left but the same objurgations for people who danced outdoors on beaches. It might be hard to explain why it was less reprehensible for two people to gyrate mutually in flimsy evening clothes in stuffy rooms than to perform the same motions in the broad daylight before thousands in only slightly less costume. But there it was. And many of the tango maniacs were as loud as the preachers in reviling the outburst.

Perhaps the next summer would see it forbidden by

law, or perhaps the very matrons would be at it in the moonlight. But in 1914 few but the extreme progressives were so superior or inferior to public opinion as to indulge in beach dancing.

Even Perry Merithew gasped at the first sight of the spectacle. He had motored over to Long Beach, according to a popular program, for a swim, followed by a dancing-tea, followed by a dancing-dinner, an evening of dancing at the Trouville, and a motor-ride back to town or to some Long Island home.

The day was stinging hot, and the motor-mobbed roads were foggy with dust. The sight of the vast placid sea was a boon.

Perry left his mufti in the bath-house, emerged in the legal minimum of bathing-suit, and ran into the small surf, dived through the first waves and played dolphin awhile, then went ashore, and promenaded his powerful frame, letting the sun dry him so that the sea might wet him again. A band in a pavilion was booming dance tunes to whose key and meter the waves paid no heed.

Perry walked into a little galaxy of couples dancing on the well-sanded floor of the beach. They were not very nice people, of course. But then the first people who take up fashions, sciences, and religions never are.

Perry enjoyed the rare luxury of being shocked. He denounced the exhibition to the nearest bystander. Then, on the opposite side of the wall of spectators, he saw Aphra Shaler. She had come to Long Beach under other auspices—evidently those of a man so helpless with fat that he resembled a Japanese day balloon, one of those strange bloats that have hands and legs affixed. His very appearance in a bathing-suit was an affront.

Aphra was very becomingly costumed in such garb as an overgrown doll might have worn in swimming.

Perry did not recognize her at first because she had redecorated her hair. The heap of copper wire was a pile of ashen threads. She was something new again and had

turned so pretty that he forgave her the moneys she had wheedled out of him with her ingenious, ingenuous eyes so prompt to tears.

Aphra found him so pretty that she also forgave him and forgot; forgave Perry the moneys he had lately refused her, and forgot her escort entirely. She caracoled to Perry's side, squeezed his arm, and murmured:

"Hello, Per!" Aphra was one of those who must have always a nickname for the nickname.

"Hello!" said Perry.

"Dance?" said she.

"No, thanks," said he.

"Please."

"No, thanks!"

"Where's the harm?"

"Where's the fun?"

"Try it just once—for old sake's sake."

He shook his head. She persisted.

"I dare you to."

Perry accepted the challenge. Aphra stepped into his arms, and they stepped out. The band was playing a hesitation waltz. Aphra managed to keep from treading on Perry's bare feet, and there was a peculiar exhilaration in the open air, the quaint daredeviltry of the dance.

"What's happened to your hair?" he said.

"It needed a new coat of paint, so I tried this shade for a change. Like it?"

"Immensely."

Aphra was overjoyed. She gave no further thought to her original sponsor.

The next music was a maxixe. They danced that together. Then they ran into the ocean for a swim; then came out and danced again. There was something primeval about it—something Polynesian.

Clinton Worthing had come early to the beach in the hope of surprising Muriel. He had swum and basked and

swum again, but she had not come. He joined the mob of spectators around the dancing few. The dancing shocked him—him whom such appalling things did not shock.

He watched the infatuated dervishes awhile, then turned away. He almost fell over an umbrella and sent it skirling aside.

When he hastened to recover it he found before him and beneath him the great Mrs. Schuyler squat on the sand like a sultana. She was not in bathing togs, and Worthing felt as if he had wandered out of his bath-room into a drawing-room.

But Susan Schuyler was not shocked. She smiled and said, "Sit down, won't you?"

He dropped like an invited Turk.

Susan explained: "I'm too lazy to go in to-day. My husband and my daughter are getting ready now. Do you enjoy the surf, Dr. Worthing?"

Worthing said that he did.

"I used to," said Susan. "I used to swim far out and dive from high places and all that, but now—not now."

It was hard to imagine that she had once been slim and lithe as any of these nymphs. It was hard to imagine that Muriel would one day be seated buxomly, perhaps on the same divan of sand, and speaking so of her own daughter. Worthing wondered who would be the father of that far-away daughter.

"Hello!"

Worthing looked up. Muriel and her father were standing over them, smiling down. Muriel was swaddled up in a loose cloak. Jacob, the Titan of business, was bare-legged, bare-armed, bare-footed, bare-headed. He made a fine figure of a man of age.

Muriel expressed great surprise at seeing Worthing. He was glad to feel that it was mingled with delight. He rose to his feet and blushed; and she blushed, too.

In other times and other climes, when parents selected their children's spouses for them, a girl was thought en-

lightened indeed if she had her future husband pointed out to her when he passed her window in his long robe. And if she gave him a glimpse of her eyes through a lattice or a wave of the hand, she was dangerously near an adventuress.

Yet wickedness was not unknown then, and the favorite romances of those times are so licentious that they are not considered fit reading for the youth of our day who are clad scantily and hardly watched at all. Yet there are good girls and boys to-day, honest loves and decent marriages.

In any case, those who believe in eugenic unions should welcome the inspections that take place at the beaches. In any case, it is not altogether undesirable that two people who might form a lifelong alliance should be given opportunity to know each other's frames without the lies and hypocrisies of costume.

If lovers could only know each other's souls beforehand in equal undress, the business of mating might not be so fertile in disappointments. But mating souls take refuge in the glamour of moonshine and in the deceptions of party manners and falsely exalted moods, and the gyves are already snapped at the altar before he can see how she behaves when the cook marches out or she how he behaves when the bills march in.

Worthing and Muriel found each other beautiful of body. But their bodies were only half of their life. Their souls they found beautiful, too; but these were still dressed up in the gorgeous habiliments of romance, of diversion unhampered by the demands of every-day life.

They had not seen each other's souls in bathing-suits. That test was yet to come.

Meanwhile there was the ocean, and Worthing was eager to be in it. The best part of it was that Winnie Nicolls was not there, nor any other rival that he knew of.

"Come on," he said; "I'll race you to the float."

Muriel put up her hands to throw off her cloak, when Perry Merithew, dancing with Aphra, whirled her way.

Perry recognized Muriel before she did him. She had never seen him in just his skin and a few yards of jersey.

As soon as he saw her Perry flung Aphra off with the curtest of "pardons." Aphra saw him greeting Muriel. His homage was evident in the back of his neck. Aphra was as angry as Worthing was.

"We're just going into the water," said Muriel.

"So am I," said Perry.

"We're going to race to the float," said Muriel.

"I'll bet you can beat me," said Perry.

"Come on, Clinton," Muriel cried, and they ran, splashing through the low froth, sidling through the mid-waves, and diving through the breakers.

Worthing put all his mettle into his Australian crawl, and was happy to find that he was first to the float by half the distance—till he realized that the canny Perry was hanging back and companioning Muriel. This race was not to the swift.

Merithew was an excellent swimmer and a neat and graceful diver. But he took care not to exploit his gifts so much that he lost sight of Muriel.

Worthing could not shake him off, and he did not enjoy competing for Muriel's attention. When Jacob came out puffing and turned the crowd of three into a convention, Worthing gave up. Besides, he really had a patient whom he had secured through the absence of another doctor and did not wish to lose by his own.

So he told Muriel good-by. She warmed his blue soul with an invitation to lunch with her somewhere on the morrow. She had to be in town, she said. He loved her enough to warn her that she would better stay away till the hot wave had passed its crisis, but she said that she could stand it if all the other millions could.

They clasped wet hands and he dived his best. She called him back. He stood treading water while she said:

"I just remembered. I may go to town this evening after dinner and spend the night at home so that I can be up bright and early in the morning. Are you busy this evening?"

Worthing's heart grew heavy enough to sink him. Dr. Eccleston, whose assistant he was, had mapped out that evening for a round of visits with him, including an examination of Happy Hanigan's condition.

"I'm terribly sorry," said Muriel.

"Not half so sorry as I am," said Worthing, and swam away like a disconsolate shark.

Perry Merithew was not saddened at all. He dared not invite Muriel to intrust her evening to him, because her father was within earshot and would not go away. But Perry made his own resolves.

When Muriel went ashore at last, and bade him good-by, he found Aphra Shaler waiting for him. She was virulent with rage.

"How dared you throw me over like that?" she stormed. "One minute you're dancing with me, the next you chuck me and never come back. If I could have swam that far I'd have come out there and scratched your eyes out—and hers, too. Whyn't you introduce me to that Schuyler brat?"

"She's particular whom she meets," said Perry.

"Not very when she sits out there on the float, showin' off her shape and swimmin' round with you. I guess she's like those other fast millionaires, all right."

Perry's eyes blazed. His voice was low, but his wrath was evident. "Leave Miss Schuyler out of it, do you hear? I won't allow a—a— I won't allow a woman like you to mention her name to me. Do you understand?"

"Oh, I see!" Aphra sneered. "You're as far gone as that. Well, you can have her, for all I care. But you've got to get me my dinner first and get me back to town. I was fool enough to listen to your con. voice again, and my gentleman friend got sore and went home. I'm stranded."

Somehow this amused Perry. He said, "I haven't a cent on me."

And he walked back to the bath-house. When he was dressed he took care to escape without providing for Aphra's return. He felt that she could take care of herself. He was going back into the company of the good.

CHAPTER LIX

WHEN Muriel reached her home she rang the bell several times without response. She began to search in her befuddled handbag for the latch-key she had been allotted at the time when she began coming home at all hours from dances; for the Schuylers, being merciful people, had mercy on their servants. Muriel had just found the key when the door was opened by the second man.

In place of the usual hospitality of Kane's smile at the sight of her his face dropped. But as we sometimes fail to hear what has been said till we have repeated it in our minds, so Muriel did not really see his expression till she was not looking at it. Then she paused on the stairway to say:

"Oh, Kane!"

"Yes, Miss."

"You looked sad when you saw me."

"Oh no, Miss!"

"Oh yes, Kane! Have I broken up anything?"

"Oh no, indeed!"

"Were you going to have a little party here?"

"Not here—oh no!—no, indeed!"

"Where, then?"

"It really doesn't matter, Miss."

"But I don't want to spoil any fun you planned. You don't get much, staying in town this horrible weather."

"Why, thank you, we were going to take a little ride to Coney Island and back, owing to the heat—but it isn't necessary."

"Oh yes, it is! I insist."

"We couldn't very well leave you alone in this big house, Miss—though, of course, Mrs. Lunney would be here; and the night watchman patrols the block; but—Oh no, thank you."

"Run right along. I'm going to bed early, anyway. Just see that I'm called at eight, and send my breakfast up at half past, for I've got an important meeting at ten."

"Yes, Miss, but really, I hardly like—"

"Not another word, Kane. I wouldn't stay in myself if I didn't have to. The town is like a furnace. It would break my heart to think that I kept you here."

"It's very good of you, Miss, but really—"

"Good-by."

Muriel's own maid was at the country house, and a chambermaid came up to supply her place, but Muriel ordered her to go about her pleasure. It is thus that one becomes a heroine to one's chambermaid, and that is being a heroine indeed.

Muriel watched from her window, and soon a chauffeur drove up in a touring-car. Muriel could not make out who he was, or whose car he drove, but she knew that when the owners are away the chauffeurs will play. She watched the truant servants pile in, and she prayed that the motor-picnic might not end with the disaster of so many such excursions from below-stairs.

Mrs. Lunney stopped in on her heavy pilgrimage to the attic to see if she could be of service; but Muriel sent her on her way. She tried to read, but the light drew wire-voiced mosquitoes, suicidal moths, and beetles that blundered about like random bullets. She let down her hair, but it was too hot about her shoulders, and she fastened it up again in two coils. She sat in the dark by the window, gazing into the shadowy demesne of Central Park, and watching the passage of the motor-'buses, their upper decks filled like window-boxes with a

swaying foliage of humanity—prisoners in town hunting an artificial breeze in the speed of the 'bus and enjoying automobiling at the wholesale rate of ten cents for each five miles or more.

No amount of wealth could persuade a zephyr to blow through even the Schuyler windows. The air was singularly lifeless, and Muriel envied the lucky ones who could go 'bus-riding. If she had not known that Dr. Worthing was otherwise engaged she would have dared to ask him to take her out. She felt peculiarly forlorn, greatly tempted to use the franchise of the American girl, and go by herself.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich once described a plot he had for a story he had never written: A man found himself the only living being in a great city; everybody else was dead through some mysterious visitation. He wandered the empty streets in desperate loneliness, and returned at last to his dismal home. He sat there in utter solitude and despair, and then suddenly—he heard the door-bell ring.

Muriel was in such a plight. So far as she was concerned, New York was an abandoned farm, the passers-by were wraiths merely. And then the telephone rang.

"There's something in telepathy, after all," she thought, as she hastened to it, feeling a kind of gratitude to the rubber oracle. "Clinton got my spirit messages at last."

She greeted space with a cordial "Hello!" and space greeted her with another.

"Hello! Is Miss Schuyler there?"

Her voice grew somber with disappointment. "This is Miss Schuyler."

"How are you? This is—"

"Oh, hello, Mr. Merithew! And how are you?"

"Crazy with the heat. What are you doing this evening?"

"Very much nothing."

"Will you take a little motor ride with me?"

"Indeed not."

"I'm horribly lonesome."

"You're not the only one."

"Then why not come along and save two lives?"

"It wouldn't be quite respectable."

"There's nobody in town to know. That makes it respectable."

"Crowds are going by on stages."

"Then let's get on a stage and ride. It's unutterably proper; twenty chaperons on every 'bus."

"Some other time."

"The only people in town except us are strangers from the far West. We might as well be masked."

She resented this, but it reassured her, and after a little further parley she answered, "All right."

"Shall I call for you?"

"No; I'll slip out and meet you at the corner. You go there and wait. I'll watch for you from here, and when you're there I'll come."

"Fine for you! I'll not be a minute. I'm only a few blocks away—at a drug-store."

She felt that she ought not to go, and that made it more interesting. She tiptoed about with delicious stealth and found her hat in the dark. She took two hat-pins from the cushion on her dressing-table. One of them was Maryla's claw-gripped amethyst.

She found Perry Merithew waiting, and they giggled like runaway children. They hailed the first north-bound 'bus and climbed to the upper deck. They found two seats together, and the motion of the stage swept their faces with a benison of fresh air. They talked of nothing much but the tyranny of the weather, all the way up, and they kept their places when the stage turned back. When Muriel suggested getting out at her home, Perry begged her to complete the voyage to Washington Square. She consented.

By and by the comfort of the high, cool voyage affected her as happiness usually did—it made her eager to share it. She began to talk of her poor who could not know such luxury:

"I'd like to charter a hundred of these 'buses and give them all a ride."

"An excellent idea," said Perry. "For a thousand dollars a night you could take quite a few of them up and down the Avenue and show them what they're missing."

"It seems a crime for us to have so much and they so little. All these palaces and churches locked up and this street empty, and those poor souls crowded into such stifling hovels!"

"Are you going to become one of those ghastly socialists who don't believe in letting anybody have anything because everybody can't have everything? And, after all, we haven't so much. A man can only wear one suit of clothes at a time and eat one meal at a time; and the less he eats the happier he is, no matter how rich he is."

"But to toil and slave the way they do!"

"There's no unhappiness like being idle," he answered, glibly. But even she caught that fallacy:

"They have the idleness, too—thousands and thousands are out of work. And idleness means to them that they can't even get their one meal at a time."

"Oh, I fancy there's just as much real unhappiness in the mansions as in the tenements."

"Have you ever seen the tenements?"

"No, and I'm proud of it."

"Well, I've seen a little of them and I'm not proud of them."

"I hate slums," said Perry.

"So do I," said Muriel. "So do the people that live in them. You really ought to see how they live. It would break your heart."

"Thanks. That's a good enough reason for staying away."

"No, it isn't. It's our duty to know how our poor relations are getting along. You dared me to take this ride. I dare you to go over there. Perhaps I can get you interested in the sufferings of the poor poor."

"What good could I do for them?"

"The little Italian boy is safe at home because of you, and Happy Hanigan is getting uncrooked. You might find somebody else to help."

"Heaven forbid! Your first little trip cost me two thousand dollars already. That will have to stand for my contribution this year. And it got you kidnapped and you escaped with a lot of head-line fame. You'd better keep away, or the bandits will get you again if you don't watch out."

The stage was entering Washington Square through its isolated arch of triumph, which has led to nothing triumphant since the old pleasance-ground of the aristocracy was captured by the tenement populace. On every bench they were draped, Italians mainly, with numberless children fast asleep on their mothers' laps or in the baby-wagons or on the stint of grass.

There was infinite pathos in their unconscious postures, and Muriel was determined not to go home till she had emptied her hands of some mercy.

"Come along," she said, and started down the hazardous steps.

Merithew followed perforce.

They found South Fifth Avenue dingy, and turned east in Bleecker Street. The big warehouses were deserted, but wherever there were residences or boarding-houses their high stoops were filled with men and women and children either relaxed in sleep or awake and watching as if for help to come from somewhere, if only a bit of motion in the suffocating atmosphere.

The Bowery did not look miserable enough to be interesting, and Muriel went on to First Avenue, where the Elevated tracks added noise and gloom. Then she

turned south with Perry, who protested that his ears and his nostrils were being persecuted. But Muriel would not relent.

In Allen Street there was suffering in plenty for the most avid heart. The dark alley was ovened in by the tracks of the Elevated Road, its thick-set iron pillars forming a gigantic gridiron where the people squirmed or rested inert like lobsters broiled alive; for some had been cooked to inanition and some still wriggled.

The street was filled from curb to curb, and the walks and stoops from curb to wall on either side. Throngs moved slowly or stood exchanging comments on the torture of the day and the night. It had been a famous battle with the heat, and people told of their struggles for breath as of incidents in a combat. There had been several deaths and numberless prostrations. The hospitals had been busy, and the ambulances had gone clanging in all directions. And bigger ambulances had lumbered through the town, carrying off the horses that had fallen in dozens.

The humidity had added its lash to the rack of heat, the children had been too listless to play, and the night found them fretful and distraught.

Most of the men in Allen Street went about with their coats on their arms, but even here there were some descendants of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who walked this fiery furnace without wilting their starch. The art of ready-made clothing enabled them to dress a little more foppishly than Merithew dared. There were women, too, who kept themselves neat in spite of all, so that there was nothing especially foreign in the appearance of Muriel and Perry, and no attention was paid to them by wretches too full of the problem of endurance to note or remember who went by staring. Besides, the slumsters are always being inspected and their interest blurs like that of freaks in a dime museum.

These myriads had stewed all day at their tasks, and

their eyes smarted with the sweat that had run into them. The one thing that could have excited them would have been a little shaking of the blanket of hot air.

Push-carts were aligned for miles. The stock beneath was protected with oilcloth covers, and on these bunchy couches hundreds of youngsters sprawled in all stages of dress and undress. At the side of the push-carts the fathers and mothers slept seated on chairs or boxes, their heads bent forward on the carts, as if they had fallen asleep over vain old prayers.

Chairs and benches were planted in the street and on the walks so thickly that it was hard for Perry and Muriel to move about without waking some fagged wretch whom sleep had blessed at last. They picked their way like Dante and Vergil slumming in hell.

Everywhere there were children burdening laps or arms, and always they had the preference in the choice of lesser evils.

Cellar doors were at a premium, and on one of them an ancient grandmother in Israel, with her brown wig fallen from her white hair, lay on her back, with only a shopping-bag for pillow. In one fat arm a fat little girl was coiled.

Seated on a chair alongside was a mother, lean and scrawn and ugly as one of the Madonnas they carved in wood in medieval Germany, and across her lank knees lay a child gaunt and starved and rigid as wood. Both seemed ready and labeled to die.

The mother looked from her too large eyes at something far away or near and vague, and stared so fixedly that when Perry and Muriel passed in front of her her vision did not waver. They seemed not to interrupt it.

On the steps next to her a man, her husband, perhaps, bare-footed and clad only in trousers and undershirt, drooped like a broken puppet, his arm thrust through the railing and hanging palm up, begging. His face had no softer pillow than the rusty iron rail.

Muriel paused beyond this family to brood over it. "If this is better than their own home inside, what must their home be?" she whispered. "I ought to do something for them, but it seems a shame to wake them up."

"Once you begin, where will you stop?" said Perry. "Look up there!"

Muriel's eyes followed his gesture, and she saw the dreadful freight of distress piled up in layers.

On the fire-escapes mounting in tier on tier people were scattered as if there had been a battle in the sky and it had rained human bodies, and they had caught there as they fell. A few of the more modest had hung up clothes and sheets to give them privacy. Others were too desolate to care whether they were seen or whether they dropped down from their racks of torture.

"If I were God, I'd send a little breeze along this street," said Perry Merithew.

There was peculiar anguish in the feeling that the one solace these hordes of woe required was unpurchasable by human wealth or science or merit. The whole region was a cathedral of prayer to the god of the barometer. Though no one kneeled or upheld hands or gabled fingertips together, every attitude was humbler than any genuflection.

A sweep of wind would have been greeted as the passing of a troop of angels. And any rain would be holy water. But these mercies did not come, though cyclones and cloudbursts were harrying unpeopled wildernesses elsewhere in the world. And there was no promise of relief in the sterile sky with a moon as dry as old ivory. As to-day was bitterer than yesterday, to-morrow threatened to be worse than to-day, when the cold moon should give place to the red-hot brasier of the sun.

Suddenly Muriel paused and pointed to a cavelike doorway beyond whose dark recesses there was a blue curtain of moonlight shining in a rear court.

"This is the place where I was kidnapped, I think—if

this is Allen Street? Yes, it is! Let's get away from here. They might put me in the cellar again."

"Not while you have your body-guard with you," said Perry, arching his little wicker cane as if it were a Toledo blade. "We'll come down and explore it together—tomorrow."

"No, thank you," said Muriel. "One visit was enough."

She turned and retraced her way through the endless spectacle of the same misery in manifold forms. Perry had been startled by the realization that he had stumbled into the very parish of Red Ida and her gunmen. He was glad enough to hurry away.

Muriel, already lost, led him, lost, over to Orchard Street. Here she paused again and pointed across the crowded lane. "I've been here, too. That's where we found the poor Balinsky man who tried to kill himself; but Dr. Worthing saved his life. That's where Maryla lives — Maryla Sokalska, a beautiful girl with the pitifulest story. I'll tell you about her some day."

The name stabbed Perry like an assassin's knife. He felt guilty at first, and then his ready self-forgiveness told him that if he had rescued the girl from such a realm as this even for a few weeks, he had not done altogether ill by her.

But when Muriel said: "I promised her I'd talk to her father and mother and make them forgive her. I wonder if they are at home now. Let's go up and see."

"Let's not," said Perry, sharply.

"But I want to tell them about Maryla."

"They're not at home, I'm sure. Nobody is. Everybody has moved out into the street."

"No; they're not over there on the walk. I'd know them; the father has a big beard, and the mother is fat; and that's a young couple sleeping on the fish-block. Come on. I'm going up."

"But they'll be asleep."

"Maryla says they always work till midnight, and it's not that yet."

She was having another of her impulses, and Perry could not dissuade her or detain her. And he had not the heart to desert her.

CHAPTER LX

MERITHEW felt as if he were being haled before a judgment seat. Of course the girl's parents would not know him by sight. Yet Muriel might use his name. In any case, he dreaded meeting the eyes of Maryla's parents. If they did not know him it would be almost more humiliating than if they did.

He resolved not to go. Muriel was already in the doorway, beckoning to him. She shook her head in pity for a young couple sleeping on a broad fish-block with a naked little infant between them. She warned him to step over the two tiny curly-haired cherubim sleeping on an old shawl on the very door-sill.

Perry traversed the infants, unheeded by them or their parents, but when he put out a hand to check Muriel she was gone. She had vanished in the black of the hallway and was hissing at him to come to the stairway.

She kept ahead of him as they climbed. He followed her with increasing anger. But how could he leave her there? She went up flight after flight and he ran in her pursuit. Suddenly he collided with her in the dark. He trod on her toe. She gave a little gasp of pain, and now it was he that was the offender.

"I'm so sorry," he whispered, caressing her shoulder, "but you oughtn't."

"I'm all right, but I've lost my way. I don't know which door is theirs. I'm afraid to knock at the wrong one."

"Better come back in the daytime," he urged, clinging to her arm.

"But now that I'm so near, it seems a pity not to go on."

There was nothing to help her choice. Behind most of the doors there was a silence. Behind others there were quarrels or wailing babies. There was no encouragement to try any of the doors.

And it was asphyxiation to remain in the hall. The climb had set them both to panting hard and the air seemed to give no help to the lungs. There was a mystery of gloom and peril about them and an uncanny communion in standing so close together that they could hear each other's breath and could not see an outline. Her arm where he held it was firm and warm under the soft sleeve, amazingly alive.

Perry loved the dark, and a dark mood grew in him—a familiar mood with him in the company of women, but new in the presence of Muriel. His new thought of her seemed to make another girl of her. She did not shake his hand from her arm. Was she encouraging him or was she unaware of his clasp? His heart, never too regular, began to race like a propeller out of water. It hurt and scared him.

Muriel's very arm seemed to be thinking. Suddenly it moved with resolution, and she whispered:

"I'll try one more flight. Then I'll knock at the first door."

"I beg you!" he said. "Please come away from this odious place."

She pressed forward, but he clung to her, and his resistance brought her back suddenly against him with a delicate shock. His free arm quickened to seize her, but she shook it off with a sharp:

"Don't!"

She said it with girlish impatience and with preoccupation.

He let her go, mumbling, "I'm sorry." He heard her steps on the stairs, and with the banister for guiding-clue he followed her, struggling after her, groping toward her,

and carrying a load of remorse like a heavy trunk on his back.

He had disgraced himself before his own heart, and he wondered if he were really incapable of meeting a woman's trust with honor. He resolved to protect Muriel from his old self.

Suddenly Muriel encountered a door at the head of the stairs; it flew open before her hand and the moonlight broke in upon them. Muriel stepped out on the roof, and Perry after her.

It was emerging from all prose to all poetry, for now he could see her, yet dimly, with a mystic edging of light along her whole contour. She was staring into the moonlight, yet drowned in it as if she were a sea-creature in the depths. And there was a wonder about her as about painted figures whose eyes are not shown.

The air up here was deep and pure and oceanic, though warm and still and tropical. All about them their horizon was a saw-tooth of cornices and chimneys. In the humid distance were lights: some of them were the tower lamps of high buildings, some of them were planets. It was not easy to tell them apart.

To the east was the river with the bridges outlined in luminous dots. There was hardly a sound except their own feet scuffling across the tin of the roof still hot from the sun and uncooled by the moon. They could see nothing but the walls surrounding the roof they were on, and as they grew used to the light it proved to be dirty and littered. They understood why the tenants preferred even the sidewalks to this well.

Perry grew sick of the place and disgruntled at Muriel's unbridled curiosity. But she laughed as she commented: "It's different from the Ritz-Carlton roof, eh?" Her voice sounded loud to her and she lowered it in deference to the general hush. "I wonder what is beyond the wall," she murmured.

She prowled across to it and Perry prowled after her. One of the numerous clothes-lines caught him in the face, and he vented his wrath on that. He took from his waistcoat pocket a little silver knife and slashed the rope down.

"Ts! ts! ts!" Muriel clicked, reprovingly. "Some poor woman will suffer for that. Rope is expensive."

"So is skin," Perry snapped, and shut the knife so angrily that the blade closed on his left palm and cut it. It bled. He whipped out a handkerchief and bound it up. Muriel knotted it for him. She was acutely sympathetic till she saw that his wound was not serious.

Then her curiosity ruled her again, and she said, "I'm dying to see what's on the other side of the wall."

"That's the woman of it," Perry growled. "That's what bounced Eve out of Paradise. She found out, and stayed out."

With a sour gallantry he pushed a rickety old packing-case to the wall and set it on end. Then he helped her to mount it, and she gave him a hand up.

Now they could see across the battlement, and the sight was grievous enough. They could look down from here on several roofs, more flat and less shut in than the one they were on.

But even those other roofs were not made for dormitories, and they offered no graces or conveniences. Only the worse conditions in the rooms below could have made them tolerable.

Over the nearest tenement it seemed as if a plague had passed, leaving its victims where they fell. Some of them had provided themselves with bedding. Others slept on the tin. One middle-aged woman lay alone on a double mattress with a sheet over her and her head on a pillow. She was an aristocrat among paupers.

With their feet perilously close to her head lay a man and wife on the bare boards of an old box. Just beyond them a young man, half clad, snored into the arm across his eyes. Near him and lying on her face, with one hand

trailing on the roof, was a young woman in chemise and petticoat and stockings.

In the middle of this roof was a family of six, their heads rolled to the center like a colony of melons, their bodies stretched in all directions outward. In the least comfortable place the father was extended, one clumsy foot on top of the other, his coarse features doubly askew with sleep and fatigue. His homely wife was hung along the other rim of the mattress. Between them their five children slept: a gawky young girl on her back, with her hands flopped across her stomach and her head in the neck of a somewhat older girl without youth or grace. That one's side was weighted with the head of a child of ten or so in a nightgown, her arms and calves uncovered to the moon. The mother's hip was pillow to the head of the oldest girl, reclining with a kind of royal majesty. She belonged to beauty, and even in her disarray revealed a wasted symmetry and a pity of lovableness.

"The poor dear things!" sighed Muriel, with a dew of tears in her voice.

"They're like earthworms in a can!" said Perry Merithew, repugnance sickening his pity.

Muriel sighed again: "I don't see what right I have to all I have. My own room at home is bigger than that whole roof, and there are five—six—ten—fifteen people sleeping there. And I never do any work, and they are tired to death. I feel like selling my pretty canopied bed and all my silver things. And I will! And to-morrow I'll come down and fit out these roofs with comfortable places to sleep. They work so hard they have a right to a decent place to sleep, haven't they? Haven't they?"

Partly because his emotional heart was not immune to the mute appeal of these sufferers, but more because he knew that she wanted him to feel charitable, he said:

"You're entirely right, as usual. Yes, and you must let me help. It's a bad time of year for me, and I'm terribly

poor, but you can have anything I've got—always—for anything you want to spend it on. Here, take what I have now! I only ask you to save out enough for cab-fare home. And while you are selling your silver things, pawn these things of mine."

To his own amazement and hers he found himself thrusting into her hand what bills he had in his wallet and the coins in his pockets. She laughed softly in delight at his prodigality, and, opening her handbag, stuffed the bills in and poured in the coins. And while it was open he slipped his ring from his finger and lifted from his scarf the black pearl that was generally there, and took his watch from the chain.

"Oh, you're wonderful!" she exclaimed, dancing on the narrow platform and almost falling to the ground. When he seized her arms and rescued her, she thanked him for that also. "You are such a good man," she said, "when you give yourself a chance."

"It's you, not I," he mumbled, wondering why his voice broke.

"We make a great team, then," she said, never imagining how he had longed to put his head in the same yoke with her. "We ought to accomplish something for the poor."

It astounded him to see what happiness she was finding in this little farce of charity. It made her beatifically beautiful. If she had been at a greater distance he could have admired her merely. On an altar she would have won him to his knees.

But she was so close to him, so completely in his power, alone with him in this jungle of animals, that opportunity kept whispering to him, "Here we are again, You and I and She."

He abhorred himself and tried to wrench his mind away from such forbidden meditations. He made a tremendous effort to shake off the old habit of soul. But it was a craving that he had never fought before, and it fought

back at him till his heart was riven with torment. He kept his hands from her shoulders with mighty effort. He gripped the ledge and turned his mind to the paupers.

He tried to freeze romance out of his mind, and to curl his lip to sneers. He tried to cheapen Muriel to himself that he might restore the balance of his faculties.

"And now, young woman," he laughed, with a dry throat, "now you've got all my money, and if you tossed it over there it wouldn't keep that whole roof-load for a day. It wouldn't buy them a breath of cool air or an ounce of brains."

"But I'm going to add more money to this," she said, with a simplicity that was maddening, for her heart was not distressed about him or his self-wrestle. He tried to be harsher and bitterer.

"Suppose you did. Suppose you took all the money you have, and all your father has, and your mother and your uncle and all I have, and all our friends have—suppose you made up a purse of fifty million dollars, and scattered it on all these roofs, how long would it last—how much good would it do? Wouldn't it be like throwing it into the ocean? If you came back in two weeks wouldn't you find poverty still here? Some of the paupers would have stolen it from the others, some would have wasted their share in extravagance. But there would still be poverty; for there is always stupidity."

"Don't you think we ought to try to help the poor?" she queried, like a child rebuked. "Doesn't your heart ache for the poor souls?"

"My heart aches for everybody if I let it," he sighed. "It would break if I let it think of such things, and so will yours. And, after all, what good would it do? If you and I put on sackcloth and went barefoot through the slums of this one town all our lives, would the slums know the difference? If you gave all these people riches, would they be happy? Are rich people happy? If these people want to get rich, why don't they? They're no

poorer than many millionaires were once. If they knew how to use money they'd know how to make it."

Muriel had no arguments ready for his attack. She had acted on an instinct of benevolence, and he frightened that.

"What do you think we ought to do, then?" she stammered, feeling petty and ridiculous.

"Take the goods the gods provide!" said Perry, with quickening conviction, for now at last he was talking about his one religion. "If people have the brains or luck to earn or inherit big fortunes, let 'em spend 'em gracefully. Put the beautiful women in beautiful clothes, in beautiful homes. If all the spare cash goes to the beggars, how are we ever going to have any fine buildings, any art-galleries, opera-houses, or theaters? Must everything go for bread—and no cake for anybody?

"Why should you turn yourself into a shabby sister of charity? It would only destroy your beauty. That's the most precious thing—beauty. It melts away if you cry too much or feel too sorry for yourself—or other people. Keep beautiful. Beauty is your duty."

Somehow he had robbed her of her crusade without angering her. He had left her so idle-hearted that his praise of herself came as a help, and she felt meekly grateful for it. And, after all, charity is impersonal and general, while flattery is personal. Benevolence is a manufacture of civilization, but courtship is primeval, as old as the moon that ogled these two.

As there are geniuses in music and color and form and eloquence and statecraft and war, so there are geniuses in wooing. That was Perry Merithew's genius. There is no type or punctuation that would convey his intonations or the spell of his personality. He said nothing of any moment, but his voice had a call in it; it evoked the imagination and subdued the reason.

The young Muriel listened to him as to a famous

singer in a foreign tongue, not knowing the meaning of the words, yet thrilling to the rise and fall of the melody.

The heart of the night made the ugly roof an Egypt, and filled his blood with a sultry sullen rage of discontent that was like a desire. Muriel was gazing at the sleeping misery before her, but Perry's voice crooned across her shoulder and his breath touched her cheek.

The amorous Mephisto tried to weave a spell about her in spite of himself, for his skill was his own damnation; and though he was striving against himself with an angelic longing not to poison this sweet soul, he feared that both of them were doomed.

He smiled with torture, but she was so drowsed with reverie that when he murmured, "Your hat is too big; it hides your eyes from me," she suffered him to take the pins from it and lay them on the ledge of the wall, and to take her hat away and toss it to the roof.

Now he felt that she was too beautiful to be spared and too beautiful to be destroyed. The fierce magnetic forces of life circled about them in a coil and drew them together. Some remnant of honesty in his heart contended for her, but the tyranny of his past conquered. The insulation of distance was gone and he was struck as with a lightning.

Muriel had not noted that he was quivering in a sudden ague. She did not know of the self-duel that was killing him, the spasms of self-reproach that were throttling his heart.

She was good and she was young and she trusted him, and he could not protect her against himself. She had brought him here in the name of mercy, and he could find no mercy in himself for her. He had tried to be honorable, and he could not.

With a mad heartbreaking snarl he clenched his arms around her as if he would crush her, his hands fluttered about her hair in a satanic benediction, and he groaned

"Muriel! Muriel!" as his lips found hers and he clung to her, dying.

The kiss on her lips and the frenzy of his embrace alarmed her at last, and woke her from reverie. She attacked him like a wildcat. And she was strong and fierce with wrath at his desecration. But she could not shake off those elbows vised about her shoulders. She felt his fingers tightening slowly in her hair till the tears started from her wild eyes. She struck at him with all her power and loathing.

He never knew that she hated him. His heart had wrecked itself with its own war.

As Muriel struggled, the box they stood on tilted and fell. Perry went backward, dragging Muriel after him. The top of his head crashed against the sharp upper edge of a molding on the chimney. The impetus and the double weight cracked his skull as a boy smashes a doll's head. His body rolled across the face of the chimney and slid to the roof. It cushioned Muriel's fall, but she was dazed for a moment.

If any of the people on the other roofs heard the clatter, and wakened, they must have gone back to sleep again, for there was nothing to be seen and nothing further to be heard.

After the first shock Muriel found herself crouched on hands and knees above Perry's motionless form. She thought that he was stunned, and she was hardly less ferociously angry. She would never speak to him again. He was a blackguard.

But she could not free her hair from those talons. She tried to bend his fingers back, and they grew cold as she tugged at them.

CHAPTER LXI

ONLY slowly she understood, and if her heart had been as weak and vice-ridden as Merithew's she might have died of fear. Her instinct to shriek was choked by the ghoulish horror of her plight. She was chained to a corpse by her own hair.

She moved this way and that, hauling after her the grisly encumbrance. She sobbed and prayed. She would have been glad to die if it were not for the shame of being found so. Shaking her head like a trapped animal, she backed nearly to the penthouse door before she gave up the hope of running away from her captor. She rested again, thinking, scheming. She snatched the hair-pins from her hair and uncoiled it as best she could and tried to tear herself free. But she could not, for all the excruciation of the pain; he held too many strands. He seemed to lie there grinning at her efforts, making fun of her terror as he had made fun of her charity.

But his fingers had closed upon the outer folds of her locks, now she was a little farther away from his moon-blue face. She could twist her head up through her hair a little to ease the anguish of her neck. Yet she was no nearer freedom, and every moment brought her nearer to discovery.

Suddenly she remembered that Perry had cut down a clothes-line with his penknife. Reluctantly she put her trembling hands in his waistcoat pocket, and found the knife and opened it, and sawed a strand in two close to his knuckles. She had to hold his hand while she wielded the knife, and the horror made the pain nothing. It was

from the horror that she had to rest again before she could sever another lock.

She kept listening for some one to come up the stairs. She seemed to hear footsteps and stealthy sounds. She was afraid to look now, for she felt that people had gathered, and were watching her, whispering to one another, mocking her, waiting for her to free herself that they might seize her for the murder.

And she felt sure that all the wretched sleepers on the other roofs were sitting up and shivering and listening, and gibbering to one another in all their dialects: "What was that?" "Who is the dead man?" "Who is the woman that killed him?"

She worked with desperation, and at last she was free. She could lift her head, and sit up and throw her head back and expand her breast. The solace of release was so great that she could only be glad at first.

Then the instinct of escape took hold of her and woke her intelligence. She closed the knife with care and dropped it into her handbag. She dusted her frock and spatted her hands together. She gathered up the hairpins, and, sitting on her haunches, she put up her disordered hair like a Lorelei weirdly triumphant over her prey. But there was no Lorelism in her heart. She was a girl alone in the ruins of her life, with only her scattered wits to help her to bring off what wreckage she might.

She felt about for her hat. There were no pins in it. Perry Merithew had left them on the ledge. One of them had rolled off and fallen into a side court. She could see the amethyst head of the other pin, but it was above her reach. She stood on tiptoe and leaped up to clutch at it, but it was too high. She dared not wait and set the toppled box on end again. She must be gone.

She went cautiously to the penthouse door. She was afraid to look back. She entered into the dark and stole down the stairway. She heard quarreling behind one of the doors, a baby meowling behind another. She hurried

past. She stopped short, for she heard two men coming up the stairs. She gave herself up for lost. One was saying:

"Such a hot I never seen it. That Gehenna would be a cooler place as this Neu York. Gut' nacht!"

The other answered with a laugh: "Gut' nacht? Erschreckliche nacht! Woiss as gestern it was and morgen comes woisser yet."

They parted and went into opposite flats below. She heard the doors close, and she flitted down and down till she reached the main hall. The two babes still slept on the sill. She lifted her skirt and stepped over them. The young parents and the infant slept on the fish-block, and had not budged through all the ages of time since she had left them there.

In the street the crowd was thinner, but still numerous. More people were asleep on the chairs.

She saw the gaunt wooden mother with the scrawny child still stretched across her lank knees. The woman's eyes were still watching the approach of the one who had not come to her in her poverty and despair, but had flown to the roof and seized upon Perry Merithew in his pride.

The lights in Allen Street were dim. An Elevated train roared overhead in a swoop as of pursuing furies. But nobody noticed Muriel with more than a dreary glance.

She walked along, frantically dusting her frock, lifting her knees to brush the rust from them. She walked till she found a Second Avenue car. It was so crowded with home-comers from Coney Island and the other beaches that she had to stand. The men were yawning and the women bedraggled and bleary with the heat.

She rode to Forty-second Street and walked across to the Grand Central Station. There she took a taxicab to her home. She gave the man a handful of silver—Perry Merithew's silver.

The patrolman was coming down the block when she let herself in at the door with her key. She made a casual

smile ready for any servant she might meet. But no one saw her. The marble stairway had a mausoleum look. The banister was cold as a tombstone under her flinching hand. She gained her room unwitnessed.

She bathed and slipped into her nightgown, and wept over her mangled hair and trimmed it as best she could.

She heard the servants come home and bid muffled good-nights outside to the chauffeur and exchange soft laughter over the memories of their tawdry carnival.

Without any thought of irony, she drooped to her knees and thanked God for His bountiful mercies in helping her to escape to the security of her father's home, and she begged forgiveness, though she was not sure what she asked forgiveness for.

When she rose she heard the patrolman's slow footsteps as he sauntered by. He was there to protect her. But when he learned what she had done he would force his way into the house and drag her to jail.

All her father's wealth could not shield her from the law. Could God Himself shield her from the fact that she had killed a man? Poor Perry Merithew! Lucky Perry Merithew! He had escaped from a world where such things could be. She felt ineffable remorse, but she could not know just what to repent or where her mysterious guilt began.

She crept into her bed. The sheets were cold as snow. She drew the blankets over her and hid her face under them and huddled together in icy throes of utter dismay.

CHAPTER LXII

ON that hot night in July among the hundreds of wretches whom the relaxed laws permitted to sleep in Central Park one poor jade of the shops had made her bed on a knoll across the street from the Schuyler home. She had worked hard at her counter, swaying on her feet all day, and gone trudging to her boarding-house at night, only to find her hall bedroom insufferably stifling. She had walked across the eastern avenues to the Park and had found a nook there among the shrubs and had toppled over on the dewless grass.

Sleepless with the very famine of sleep, she had gazed at the dark windows of the Schuyler mansion and had thought of its lucky tenants with bitter envy. She was an average girl, who had been averagely honest and dishonest. She had told her quota of lies, had cheated her employer modestly, had strayed a little into many of the by-paths from perfect virtue. But she had not been caught nor punished with anything except continued poverty.

She saw the brief light in Muriel's room, and when it was quenched the dark window had seemed the very emblem of cool security and peace and luxurious content.

She had rolled on the grass in an agony of covetousness and had moaned, "O Gawd, whyn't you throw some them things my way?"

Muriel, if she had known, would have been glad to exchange lots with her. For Muriel in her palace, in her room copied from the Petit Trianon, in her bed fit for a princess, in her nightgown of silk and lace, between her

sheets of sheerest linen—Muriel was stretched on the iron bed of remorse; her thoughts were the thoughts of a murderess escaped by a miracle whose continuance she could not hope for.

She was almost more bewildered than she was regretful or afraid. She could not explain the hideous effect by any causes that she could trace. They were so innocent and it so packed with guilt.

She could say, "I ought not to have gone out riding on the 'bus with Perry Merithew," but the worst of that was indiscretion, and its heaviest appropriate penalty a little gossip. Once embarked on the escapade, she had tried to redeem it by taking her escort to the slums in the hope of engaging him and herself in some profitable charity.

She could say, "I ought not to have gone into that tenement on Orchard Street," but her object had been to reconcile an estranged family and bring home a lonely girl.

She could say, "I ought to have turned back from that roof at once," but her curiosity had been for education in the miseries of the poor.

She could say, "I ought not to have let him touch me. It was odious of me to listen to his amorous voice. It was vile to linger in his arms for even a moment." For that she felt ashamed enough, and groveled before her saner self. But the penalty for that at most should have been belittlement in his eyes and her own. And she had speedily recovered from that spell of his enchantment. She had immediately hated herself and fought him off.

And there the chaos began.

She had brought upon herself the guilt of murder by saving herself from the guilt of dalliance. Her decency had been his destruction and hers. And that was the puzzle that maddened her.

What else ought she to have done? She must either have let him have his infamous way with her, or she must have resisted him. God could not have wanted her to yield; it was her better soul that fought.

Then why did God make him die? She could find no clue, and there was no comfort in saying that the human cannot understand the divine.

Justify her act as she would, its consequence was the death of a man.

Once she had killed Perry, what ought she to have done? There was the choice of calling in witnesses, or of trying to escape. It was unthinkable that she should have remained there on her hands and knees with her hair in his cold hands, and screamed till people came. They would have asked her questions that she could not answer except with odious implications that would have blasted her good name for life, and would have given her and her father and her mother to intolerable disgrace.

She had escaped for her parents' sake as much as her own. She owed them more duty than she owed the public or her companion. She was completely assured that she did the right, the only, thing to do, when she cut herself free from Perry Merithew's fingers.

Besides, God must have wanted her to get away, or He would have had her caught. And if He wanted her to get away, then He must mean for her to get away for ever. For it was inconceivable that she should go forth in the morning and say to the people, the wondering people: "I killed him! I, Jacob Schuyler's daughter, the daughter of the great Jacob Schuyler and his good wife, killed the notorious Perry Merithew when he was making love to me at midnight on a lonely roof. And when I found that he held me by the hair, I took his penknife from his pocket and sawed my hair free. See, here are the traces of his penknife in my hair. Match my hair with the strands he holds and see! Now make me a scandal to the world, and cover my father's and my mother's white heads with ugly shame."

No, God could not ask that! Then He must mean that she should go on hiding from the public and the newspapers and the police. For if she told the people, they

might not believe that she had meant no harm to Perry Merithew. They might not believe that she meant only to save him and herself from a miserable wicked deed. They might send her to the Chair! Strap her to that throne of dishonor and shatter her with the lightning. She did not deserve to be branded and punished as a murderess. Yet Perry Merithew did not deserve to be killed. He was a bad man, but not a murderer. And they only killed murderers. Yet he was dead, and she was in danger of death.

Why? Why? Why?

The word burned in her brain like a live coal that will not be quenched even by the blood that seethes wherever it rests.

She said the word over to herself until it became gibberish; she shook her head and whispered, No, no, no! till that word became the uncouth chattering of an ape. Everything she said to herself, in that long dark communion in the cloister of her arms locked over her head, became jabber, till she felt that she was going mad, was gone mad.

And the worst fear of all her fears was that in her madness she might begin to babble and might blab the truth.

For the old spirit that whispers: "Tell it! Tell it to somebody! Tell it!" was whispering it to her. She squeezed her hands across her ears, but the whisper seemed to steal in between.

It was too much agony for one young girl to bear, and all that saved her was that she was not strong enough to bear it. By and by her nerves, like wires that have carried too heavy a charge, burned out. She could feel no more, regret no more, think no more. Exhaustion came to her in the pardon of sleep.

When the rays of the risen sun like a cat-o'-nine-tails lashed awake the dreary slumberers on the grass in the Park, and on the benches, and the chairs, and on the tenement roofs, it found her what the desolate shop-girl, drag-

ging herself from her couch to her counter, imagined her to be—a beautiful figure blissfully asleep under a canopy of silk.

Long after the shop-girl had finished her coffee and oatmeal in the quick-lunch room, and had taken her place in the narrow aisle along the shelves, Muriel was awakened by the sound of water set running in the marble tub, and by the timid voice of the housemaid:

"You left word to be called at eight, Miss. It's half past now, please."

Muriel sat up, blinked drowsily at the familiar surroundings, and wondered why she felt so heavy-headed; why every muscle ached; why she felt so afraid.

And then she remembered and flung herself back among her pillows, and hid her face, and was again the criminal, the fugitive, the sneak who had no place in a reputable home.

She whispered to the maid: "Go away! Leave me alone! Go away!"

But the maid supposed that this was merely the usual protest of a pretty lag-abed against the morning outrage. She was full of sympathy, but she urged: "Beg pardon, Miss, but you said it was important. And your breakfast is coming up, please."

Muriel nodded obedience and beckoned for her bath-robe, thrust her heavy arms into it, and her bare feet into the little mules, and slunk to her bath-room. She felt as if she dragged clanking leg-irons at her feet.

She longed to drown herself in the hot pool, to steep herself in oblivion, and let her soul escape like steam, palely visible one moment and then nothing. But when she was again in her bed, with the tray of breakfast upon her knees, she was hungry. The iced grape-fruit was sharply sweet, the egg in the cup was full of savor, and the coffee was worth living for.

On the tray was a folded morning paper. She was afraid to open it, but at last she did, as gingerly as if the

ink were venomous. She saw that there were big head-lines and she was afraid to look.

But it was only more excitement about the assassination of the Archduke of Austria and his wife. The deed had been done a month ago, and as far away as Bosnia in a curious unheard-of place called Sarajevo. A young Servian had pistoled them both to death, and the minor head-line declared that the result of the act might reopen the old Balkan trouble.

It was all as remote to Muriel as Bosnia itself. She could not imagine that it would ever affect her or any one she knew. She searched the paper, and there was not a line about her own assassination of Perry Merithew. She felt a tremendous relief for a moment. Then the burden of suspense fell back crushingly upon her aching head.

Still a little dazed, she fumbled in her mind, wondering why she had left word to be called. Last night was so far away. She recollected it at last. There was a meeting in the United Charities Building, and she had promised to be there. What was the object of the meeting?

Something about children playing in the streets. Oh yes. One day she had invented a foolishly pretty scheme. So many, many children got run over in the streets. Yet the children had no other place to play. People had wondered what to do, since they could not keep the children indoors all the time. And then Muriel had had the sublimely foolish idea that since the children could not be kept off the streets, the wagons and motors must be. The scheme had taken the shape of closing certain streets to traffic at certain hours.

It had appealed to Muriel, and the allegedly heartless town was to be urged to accept it.

It was as amusingly apt as an Irish bull.

Muriel smiled at the thought of it. She would go to the meeting. She must go. Her absence would create comment. Her presence would be an argument for innocence.

And then she remembered that Mrs. Merithew was the chairman of that committee.

Muriel thrust the tray away and fell back on her pillows. She could not, would not, dared not, face the wife of the man she had—she could not think the word.

But sleep would not take her back into its nihilism. Lying awake, she felt helpless before the world, exposed, exhibited to the eyes of mankind. If she were up and moving about she could at least run.

She raised herself once more and flung into her clothes. The bungling ministrations of the maid who was not used to taking care of her or her things tempted her to frenzies of rebuke. She could have screamed and struck at her.

But she held in her temper, and was desperately patient. And at last she was dressed and her hat was on and she left the house. She would not wait for one of her father's cars to be summoned from the garage. She walked till a taxicab came along, and when she got in, and the shoddy old driver leaned out to hear where he should go, she wanted to tell him, "Canada!" But she told him, "The Charities at Twenty-second Street and Fourth Avenue." And she rode through the blithe morning streets wondering what the people would do if they knew what she had done.

She reached the meeting-place and told the taxi-man to wait. She went up in the elevator and found a room full of women, mostly natrons or matronly spinsters with a sense of general motherhood. Their motives were those of Sisters of Charity, but their costumes were the most fashionable.

Mrs. Merithew greeted Muriel with voluble affection. She did not even know that she was a widow, that her husband had died on a roof in Orchard Street! It seemed impossible that Mrs. Merithew should be here laughing and brightly dressed if her husband were actually dead.

Muriel felt for a moment that the whole thing was a mere delirium.

Mrs. Merithew called the meeting to order, explained triumphantly that she had seen the necessary city officials, and had won from them an order closing the selected streets during the afternoon hours. It was a glorious victory, one of the tenderest acts of the great-hearted city. A vote of thanks to Miss Schuyler for suggesting the idea was moved and carried. Several women called "Speech! speech!" but Muriel shook her head and smiled in a bewildered way.

Muriel recalled that day, a year or so ago, when she had come to town and motored through a street crowded with children who had no other place to play, and her father's car had struck one of them down—the crippled Happy Hanigan. The chauffeur had looked at her, and had asked if he should run away; but she had forbidden the escape, had faced the mob and been wounded by it, had quelled it and taken the victim of the accident under her own protection.

If she had never carried him home, she would never have met the Angelillo people or known of their kidnapped boy. Then she would never have gone to her father's office to beg for his ransom money; she would not have met Perry Merithew then, or perhaps ever. She would not have begun that chain of meetings that ended in his death.

If she had done the cowardly thing, or the indifferent thing, she would now be innocent, at peace and unafraid.

What was the moral of it all? She had done good, and evil had come of it! If she had done evil, good would have come of it!

The women were talking, many of them at once. The success of their endeavor made them garrulous. Muriel wanted to get away. She could hardly walk out in the midst of some one's speech. Some one was always talk-

ing. There were no interstices. The next speaker was always under way before the last one had finished.

Muriel began to fear again that she was going to go mad and shout the truth. She determined to slip out. But Mrs. Merithew motioned to her, and whispered:

"I want to see you—after."

When at last the meeting adjourned Mrs. Merithew took Muriel by the arm, clung to her in the elevator, would not let her go home in the taxicab she had held. They had a silly combat on the walk till Muriel, for peace' sake, paid her driver and dismissed him and got into the Merithew car.

And then a queer man with only one eyebrow and a half pushed forward and asked Mrs. Merithew if she knew where her husband was to be found? And Mrs. Merithew turned to Muriel and made a joke of it, murmuring:

"A funny question to ask me!"

Muriel could have told the man where Perry Merithew was, and the struggle to keep from telling him was like a death-wrestle. The car moved away just in time to keep her from shrieking at him what she knew.

And then a horde of newsboys charged on the car, brandishing extras. Mrs. Merithew would not look at them. She was chattering about the forthcoming *America's Cup* races,and supposing that Muriel would see them, of course, from Winnie Nicolls's yacht.

Muriel caught a glimpse of red head-lines:

MERITHEW MURDERED

Already her deed was history. How long would it remain anonymous? But at least the truth was out! That was good! She could breathe. The suffocation of the secret was gone from her lungs. She plucked Mrs. Merithew's sleeve to call her attention to the bulletin. But Mrs. Merithew paid no heed, and Muriel was glad.

They rode on. Muriel wanted to get home at once and hide, for the whole town was alive to the news. She saw the extras everywhere.

But Mrs. Merithew laughingly compelled her to go along with her. She had some new hats to show her. She would not be denied. She would not direct the chauffeur to the Schuyler house. She haled Muriel along, prisoner.

They reached the Merithew place, and Mrs. Merithew paused, laughing, on the steps, for the door to be opened. An old woman, the housekeeper, astounded Mrs. Merithew by rushing out and taking her in her fat arms and sobbing:

"Oh, my poor child! my poor child!"

Mrs. Merithew turned to Muriel and laughed. Would she never stop laughing!

"What's all this?" she chuckled. "Who's been bothering you now, Mrs. Keating?"

The housekeeper led her into the drawing-room and seated her on a divan and sat down by her, to Mrs. Merithew's surprise and indignation.

"There's terrible news for you, dearie," Mrs. Keating said. "Be as brave as you can, won't you, dearie? You will be brave, won't you? These things come to all of us. It's a bitter world."

Mrs. Merithew leaped to her feet and screamed: "My boy! He's hurt! He's—wha— What's happened to my boy?"

"No, it's not the boy, dearie; it's—it's Mr.—Mr. Merithew."

Mrs. Merithew sank down again, almost reassured. And then she learned the news as Mrs. Keating sobbed it:

"Your husband, dearie—he's not well—he's had an accident—he's kind of sick—he's—"

"He's dead!" Mrs. Merithew whispered, and toppled over on the old woman's shoulder.

It would have been unmerciful to bring her back to consciousness. They let her alone till her weary soul struggled back into her body. And then the hell began. In spite of Muriel's effort to quiet her, she demanded the truth. She took it as hard as could be. Instantly Perry Merithew—the heartless neglecter of her alone among women, the squanderer whose life had been another rake's progress—became the young, devoted bridegroom, the pure lover, the faithful husband.

One of the maids came running in with an extra that had just reached thus far north. Mrs. Merithew read Hallard's story of the mysterious copper-haired woman. She broke from the hands of Mrs. Keating and flung off even Muriel's strong arms. She ran amuck in her grief. Muriel called out to the gaping servants:

"Get the doctor at once!"

The servants were too panic-stricken with the news and with its effect on Mrs. Merithew to have any wits. They stood about like a mob of frightened, staring children.

Muriel could think of no doctor's name but one. She ran to the telephone and called for Clinton Worthing, begged him in Heaven's name to come quick. He came in the little car he had bought when he thought he should have a lot of patients.

Worthing had been reading the *Gazette's* Merithew extra when Muriel called him. He guessed what his task would be.

He tried to calm Mrs. Merithew with words, but she pummeled him with her hands and gabbled:

"My husband is dead. He has been murdered. He was the best man that ever lived. Some woman killed him. And I'll kill her. I will! I'll kill her! As soon as I find her, I'll kill her!"

Young Worthing told her that she was quite right to plan such a thing, but she must get her strength first. He could not drug her with words. He made ready a

solution, and while she pounded him with one hand, he held the other arm and thrust a needle into her flesh and pressed a little piston-rod and drove nepenthe into her soul. And by and by she grew placid because a chemical was in her veins. The consolations and submissions that self-control and advice and philosophy could not give her now she got in liquid essence.

When Mrs. Merithew was subdued, Worthing turned to Muriel and said, "You look pretty bad yourself."

"I'm all right," she answered in a husky tone. There was a grimace on her drawn face. It was meant for a smile.

Worthing answered it with a scowl. "You're positively green. I'm going to take you home before you keel over. My car's outside."

There was a kind of glory in ordering her about and in taking her in his car—a poor thing, but his own. He drove to the Schuyler house, rang the bell with authority, and, entering, took command of the palace.

He said to the maid, "Undress her and get her to bed."

He did not leave the room. He was a doctor on duty. He busied himself with preparations and instructions.

"Take off her shoes first," he commanded, "and loosen her corsets. Get her to bed. Fill the ice-cap now and the hot-water bottle."

Muriel accepted all the maid's services till the girl put her hands on Muriel's head, saying:

"I'd better take down your hair."

Muriel let out a cry, struck her hand away, and recoiled out of her reach. The maid stared in wonderment, and Worthing reeled before a terrific thought that smote him like a random bullet.

But it glanced from the hard surface of his reason, and left him rather ashamed than suspicious.

CHAPTER LXIII

MURIEL was trying to excuse herself. She was laughing uncannily, and apologizing to the maid: "I'm sorry, my dear. I didn't mean to strike you. But I can't bear to have my head jarred this morning. It aches so!"

She ran out to her dressing-room. When she came back she wore a quaintly fetching new-old-fashioned boudoir cap. She was smiling with vigor.

She marched toward the bed, but collapsed before she got there. She found herself in Worthing's arms. It was wonderful to have him save her from a tumble. He thought she was very beautiful. And he thanked God that he knew what was known about taking care of people in distress.

She apologized for her behavior and whispered: "That poor maid gets on my nerves. I can't stand her touch."

"I'll get rid of her," said Worthing, "and send you a trained nurse."

"But I don't want a trained nurse!"

"That makes no difference; you get one, all the same."

It seemed to give Muriel as much comfort to be coerced as it did him to coerce. He left her and went back to his car. He telephoned to a club of trained nurses and arranged for one of them to report at Muriel's home. He reported there himself within an hour. The nurse had come and gone already.

Muriel's only excuse was, "I didn't like her."

"What type of nurse do you like?" said Worthing.

"I don't want anybody. I won't have anybody. I'm not ill."

He would have been glad to have her very ill, and to save her from exquisite complications by unheard-of skill and devotion. He was a doctor before he became a lover. Besides, the lover of him told the doctor of him that if the latter could save her from death the former might have a chance at her life.

He was disappointed a little when Muriel refused to surrender. He could not imagine how tempted, how ferociously tempted she was to make him indeed the physician of her soul. But she let him go, though she urged him to come back soon.

Then her loneliness was overpowering. Her father and her mother would fight for her, but they must not know.

She wanted to leave town, but she dared not. She sat in her window and watched the Avenue. The people who went by staring seemed to be looking for her. Those who did not look or who glanced idly were disguising their interest. The patrolman sauntering past was a jail guard. The loafer on the Park wall was a detective. The servants were spies on the pay-roll of the secret police.

She was sure that she saw in the servants' eyes a wolfish glint of pursuit. She kept them away as much as possible. She pretended to want to sleep, and locked them out, but she lay awake, planning and conspiring with all her might to defraud justice or at least the police part of justice; for in her mind nothing could be more unjust than her present plight or the penalties that might be inflicted on her.

She could not easily dispose of her hair. She took it down again and again and studied it. If Merithew's fingers had closed upon it higher on her head, she could never have concealed the eight marks of severance. But she had worn it in two coils and he had seized it there.

The fashion in coiffures that autumn was the high "French twist" with all the ends tucked in under.

Muriel had been planning to have her hair dressed so, but she had not got round to it. She thanked Heaven for that deferment, else all of Perry Merithew's fingers would have clasped her hair almost at the roots, and the slashes would have announced her guilt hideously.

She thanked Heaven again for the style that was now at her disposal. Now she could fold the ragged ends beneath a swirl of hair, and she would be like nearly everybody else. So she joined the great majority and did up her hair in the French twist. Yet if her maid should try to brush and comb it as usual she would notice the butchery at once. If a detective should insist on examining her hair and matching it with the locks in Perry's hands there would be no escape for her.

She began to feel that there was no escape for her, anyway. She was afraid to leave town, afraid to leave the house, afraid to stay in it, afraid of everything, everybody.

The need of some one to confide in grew imperious, and she felt a loneliness for her father and mother.

They had always protected her from every evil, and reasoned away every bogie. She was tempted to go out to the country place at once, but she was afraid to start to run, lest her wits should be stampeded and lest people might wonder why she had vanished.

Late in the afternoon her father telephoned that he was in town with her mother, who had some shopping to do. They were going back on the yacht at six. She must meet them at the landing-slip. Muriel demurred a little, but her father stormed, and it was good to be commanded.

In the cool of the afternoon she rode down Fifth Avenue through the home-going flood tide of people. Everybody was reading an evening paper. The crowded tops of the stages fluttered with journals. Even the occupants of stately motors who did not think it looked correct to read

as they rode could not postpone their greedy interest in the Merithew affair.

Muriel was tormented with curiosity to read what was said. For all she knew, her name was in the head-lines. When the car was checked for a time by the cross-current of traffic at Forty-second Street she had the chauffeur buy her several papers from a newsboy.

On one of them Merithew's name was in red; she feared that the dreadful ink would incarnadine her fingers, and she put it aside for a more sober paper.

It was a strange experience to be the only one who knew what all these millions were trying to learn; what all these reporters were guessing at. The minor head-lines told her that the police were baffled, and this gave her some comfort.

But when she read that a certain Aphra Shaler was suspected and had taken flight, and that "Red Ida" Ganley, who had been seen dancing with Perry Merithew, was being sought by the police, she found a new problem before her. The question was no longer one of saving merely herself; she must save other women, innocent women, whom her act had dragged from obscurity into a gruesome notoriety, perhaps into a hazard of life.

She had not meant to harm Perry Merithew, and she had a right to evade the awful results of the accident. But had she the right to let them fall on somebody else? If only she could quit thinking long enough to rest, so that she might think right!

The crowded Avenue was a gantlet of terrors for her, and again that mutiny grew within herself, that rebel faction demanding that she rise and cry out to the multitude, as she had seen suffragettes stand up in their motor-cars and harangue the throngs. Only Muriel's oration would be:

"Here I am! Look no farther! Quit accusing innocent women. I am the guilty one. I killed Perry Merithew!"

But of course she did no such thing. She sat and read her paper, and the people she passed, if they noticed her at all, thought how pretty and peaceable she was. And many a woman wished that she might change places with her.

When some of the traffic policemen who knew Muriel saluted her and smiled, she smiled back, though she called herself a loathsome hypocrite. She could hardly crush down the impulse to thrust out her wrists and cry:

"Put your handcuffs on me! I have no right in this landaulet. I belong in the patrol-wagon."

But another faction in her soul, the conservative Tory faction, murmured that nothing would be gained by her degradation. Those women who had been accused had already been accused, and they would suffer no further harm, since they could easily prove their innocence. If she spoke, however, there would be no escape for her innocent father and mother from lifelong misery. Of course, if worst came to worst, and some woman were actually convicted, Muriel could—and of course would—save her from punishment by a confession. But until that time she resolved to keep her secret.

And so she went safely and calmly through the streets. Everybody was looking for her and at her, and nobody saw her. Her guilt wore the invisible cloak.

She found her father and mother on the shade-deck of the yacht, trying to read the breeze-whipped papers. When Jacob rose to welcome her, a number of extras that he had been sitting on went whirling out on the wind among the wide-winged sea-gulls teetering and coasting everywhere.

Jacob kept an extra in his hand while he embraced his daughter, and Susan enveloped her hardly more in her arms than in her newspaper. And the first words they said were in unison:

"Did you hear about poor Perry Merithew?"

Muriel nodded distressfully, and Susan exclaimed:

"But poor Mrs. Merithew! How horrible for her!"

"I was with her when she got the news," said Muriel.

"Oh, my dear! You poor child! How terrible! How did she take it? Did she know any more about it than the papers do?"

Muriel shook her head and spoke with a trifle of impatience. "If you please, I'd rather not talk about it. I've had about all I can stand."

Jacob and Susan were gushing with sympathy, and motioned to each other to drop the subject; but it kept coming up. They could not keep their eyes off their papers, and at length they buried themselves in the news. The yacht backed out and pushed up the river, and by and by Muriel took a paper to read.

On the other yachts departing from the slip, and on the tugboats chugging by; on the ferries waddling to Brooklyn and back, and on the big passenger-boats bound for the coast towns of New England, everybody was reading the columns on columns the newspapers devoted to stating that they did not know who killed Perry Merithew. No one read their ignorant prolixities with so much eagerness as the one young woman who knew.

It was comfortable to be going home with her own kin, and it was encouraging to see the vast and perilous city shrinking back into the distance. Muriel was tempted anew to tell her father and mother. But she felt that she owed them a great duty. They had sheltered her as best they could from the cruelties of life; she must shelter them now. She had no right to blast their years. The public had no right to demand them as sheep slaughtered on the altar of curiosity.

But she could not let them know what she was doing for them. They never dreamed how she was repaying her debts now, how they tried her self-control with their fatuous comments.

"Something like this has been coming to Perry for

a long while," said Jacob. "He was a wrong un from the start."

And Susan, looking over her spectacles and her paper, moralized: "It all comes from being promiscuous. I always said that the slums were dangerous. Perhaps you'll believe me now, Muriel. I hope this will be a lesson to you."

"Yes, mother," said Muriel.

CHAPTER LXIV

WHILE the Schuylers were studying the extras on their yacht the rest of the populace was doing likewise. Swaying strap-hangers on the street-cars, subways, and elevated roads hid with their papers the papers of those who had seats. Commuters on the suburban trains neglected their card games in the smoking-cars; bundle-burdened women in the day-coaches were interested for once in the front page. In almost every pair of hands was an evening paper. You could make a fair guess at a man's character from the choice of his paper, except that some carried several—which may have been a further test of character. Those who read several papers knew less than those who read one, for by the late afternoon each of the journals had covered the story with its own blanket, and no two agreed.

In one paper certain statements were given as facts, and in another their very opposite. Alleged interviews with police chiefs announced in one paper exactly what another alleged interview contradicted with flatness. One paper gave the exact words of Mrs. Merithew, another printed exact words of amazingly different nature; a third told the truth, that she had refused to see anybody at all.

One paper quoted just what a certain well-known surgeon had said; a second quoted him in complete contradiction; a third quoted him as refusing to say anything; and the fact was that he was not in town.

All over the United States the evening papers were full of Perry Merithew. He had become an international figure.

And yet next to nothing was known of his death except that he had been found dead and that he clenched in his hands a few tufts of hair, which were assumed to be a woman's; the very color of the hair was variously proclaimed as red, yellow, golden, auburn, Titian, bronze, copper.

There would have been interest enough at any time in the solemn passing of such a comedian. There could not have been more if some of the men whose homes he had marred had murdered him with revolver, or knife, or a water-bottle, or with a poison, or a bomb sent through the mail.

People found it almost unbearable to be teased with such a cluster of riddles. Who was the woman with him? What took them to so strange a place? Did she kill him? How came her hair in his dead hands? How did she escape from his horrible clutch? And again who was she?

Instantly every woman whose hair could by any means be said to have a copper hue had become suspect. On the street-cars and in the shops such women found themselves the target of glances; they heard whispers hissing about them; they thanked Heaven for alibis, or, in some cases, wished their alibis were more pleasant to explain.

As at the trump of Gabriel, so now graves opened and dead scandals rose up, closet doors swung ajar and hidden skeletons fell out, rattling. Things muttered behind the hand hitherto were printed in head-lines now without fear of prosecution under the contemptible libel laws of New York.

Perry Merithew had known many women of copper-colored hair, and he had known many women whom no one knew he knew, for he loved the whole sex, and his tastes were eclectic.

Many quarrels were started in homes of all degrees because daughters or wives of auburn hair had smiled

on Merry Perry. Many people were forced to explain their whereabouts who had never been questioned before. Letters and souvenirs of his were burned and not a few bright eyes were wet to think how well he had earned his sobriquet of "Merry Perry," how unfalteringly he had smiled on life and codes, not with malice, but with mischief.

Now his name and fame stank like the skull of poor Yorick. There was contagion in his acquaintance. Friends of his who had vied with him in his hilarities and had boasted of knowing him well denied that they had known him at all. Men of wild life reformed temporarily, shuddering at the risks they had run. One or two profligate beaux left town in a hurry to escape the merciless inquisition and speculation of press and police.

A complex series of results followed upon Merithew's demise like ripples thrown out by a pebble tossed into a pond. Festivities were abandoned. A solemnity invaded circles of revelry. Lives were ransacked and hints were cast about with all the uncurbed recklessness of the various papers rivaling one another like *chefs* in a contest of spices.

His death affected numberless people in unexpected ways. The tenement, which even the building-inspectors and the Board of Health had neglected, now became a famous landmark. Crowds gathered to stare at it and to recognize how sinister it was. The detectives ransacking the building for clues turned up several mouse-nests, including a counterfeiter's establishment, the hiding-place of two far-hunted and much-advertised yeggmen and their girls, a pair of starving and highly sophisticated children whose parents had been sent up for drunkenness —and other picturesque people.

But among all the curious matters brought to light the one thing not brought to light was the name of the woman whose hair Merithew retained in his clutch.

Muriel herself was tormented with flashes of impulse

to stand forth and settle the mystery. But there were others to consider besides herself. She had no right to blacken the family escutcheon just because Perry Merithew was a scoundrel. She grew very bitter against him.

Once she had occasion to look in her handbag, which had been lying about unheeded.

She poured the contents on the bed. Out rolled Perry Merithew's ring, and his pearl, his watch, and his money.

Muriel fell back from them with a little cry, as if she had emptied a nest of little rattlesnakes. And indeed these relics were almost as dangerous. Yet somehow they seemed to plead for him. The poor fellow had given them to her with a lavish generosity. He had not been altogether bad. Yet everybody was talking of his vices, and nobody was defending him. The papers were full of his extravagances and escapades, his love-affairs and fopperies, his cynical repartees, his brilliant representation of the worst activities of the idle rich. Not a word was printed in his behalf, not a word of excuse or forgiveness or understanding.

Muriel felt that she ought at least to tell what she knew of his good deeds. If a man's transgressions were so important as to require all the space he was receiving, his good deeds surely deserved mention at least.

This thought, even more than the fierce centrifugal force of a secret, began to fight against her instinct of self-protection. A certain faction in the congress of her soul demanded that she should not deny the man his *nil nisi bonum*, the one great luxury of the newly dead. Poor Perry! Everybody was saying nothing but ill of him. Yet there was one person who could say: "He went to the roof because of his generosity and his gallantry. He was not robbed of his jewels and his money. He gave them to the poor."

It was hideously unfair that these things should not

be published. The ring and the pearl and the coins seemed to demand it.

But the moment Muriel resolved to speak, she imagined the result of such a declaration. People would immediately exclaim: "So Muriel Schuyler defends him. She is the only one who does. Why? She must have been very intimate with him. She'd better be investigated, too. Since she knows so much, she must know more."

This drove Muriel away from the plan. And so she rearrived by another circumlocution at her old resting-place, that she must not speak. Also she realized the danger of these trinkets. The papers said that the police were searching the pawnshops for them. What if they searched her house? What would be said if they were found in her possession? They would be documents for her conviction.

But where could she hide them? She looked here and there—in this drawer, in that closet, inside the fireplace, under the rugs. No place was safe. Every nook and cranny was sure to be ransacked by the enemies of dust, the house-cleaning brigade.

She stood transferring the things from one palm to the other, as if her hands refused them. She felt sorry for other poor murderers who did not know what to do.

Suppose she destroyed the things. It would be strangely difficult to get rid of a watch and a diamond and a pearl. And then, some day, she might be vitally eager to produce them in support of her story. If they were done away with, that hateful nagging Why? would come up again.

She wished that she might send them to Mrs. Merithew anonymously. But it is very hard to be anonymous. Handwriting is hard to disguise. It is hard to drop a letter in a mail-box without leaving some clue. Messenger-boys are perilous. She could not leave the parcel at Mrs. Merithew's door and get away without risk.

EMPTY POCKETS

It was maddeningly difficult to lose things on purpose. The vast invisible spy-system of circumstances regarded her with ironic amusement.

She opened a sachet-bag and stuffed them there, and sewed them in. But the bag seemed suspiciously heavy. The first maid that lifted it would heft more than perfumed fluff. Muriel opened the seam and took them out and sewed it up again. She opened a pincushion and cached them there, and the first pin she jabbed in for a test struck the face of the watch. She took them out again. She studied the mattress, but she did not believe that she could repair a rip with perfect imitation.

She was afraid to have the things on her person, and afraid to have them out of her reach. She paced the room faster and faster. The stupid objects were driving her out of her mind. They stared at her with the evil eye.

She went to the series of wardrobes in which the great store of her equipment was kept. She dared not hide the things in any of the crannies or attach them to any of the properties.

At length, in a drawer filled with an exquisite rubbish of ribbons and velvet patches, broken ornaments and souvenirs, she found two or three old dolls that she had kept by her since she had outgrown them.

One was a tall and haughty snob of wax; another an exquisite porcelain fairy, and a third a burly cloth puppet of distinctly plebeian appearance—a kind of servant doll. There was a gash in its integument whence the stuffing exuded. This had once been her faithful, unfailing friend, the confidante of her most important secrets. "Suki," she called it.

She thrust the watch and the pearl and the ring in among the rags, sewed up the wound, and felt enormously reassured.

In a rapture of relief she hugged the doll hard and whispered to it, childishly: "Suki, you never told on

me before. Remember I'm trusting you now with my life."

She put Suki back among the memories and marveled at what time had wrought in her since she first began to lug that doll about the world. Then she shoved the drawer shut and resumed the business of thwarting her destiny.

CHAPTER LXV

WHEN the total number of persons convicted of murder every year is subtracted from the total number of persons murdered every year the remainder is appalling. The Merithew affair was drifting into the remainder.

The police themselves were not more determined to solve the problem than the *Gazette* reporter, Hallard. He felt that this was his own private crime. He had written the first extra and in a sense copyrighted Merithew's taking off. He was determined to write the last extra.

The Merithew case became his obsession. He never went anywhere that he did not keep one eye open for a possible agent.

His first effort was to trace the owner of the hat-pin he had found on the roof. He took it to a number of jewelers and to various dealers in notions. None of them could help him except negatively. He could not learn who had manufactured it, though he made himself a nuisance among the goldsmiths that keep a guild in Maiden Lane.

He was afraid to withhold the pin for more than a day or two. He had neither fear nor respect for the police, but his city editor, Ulery, grew uneasy. He questioned if even the freedom of the press, which overrides the freedom of everybody else, implied the right to steal an important clue and keep it as private property.

Besides, the publication of it might bring it to the notice of the merchant who sold it. And he might remember

who bought it. Many crimes had been run to earth in just this way, and the *Gazette* could claim the entire credit.

Before Hallard relinquished it to the police, he gave it to the "art department" of the *Gazette*, and a huge portrait of the pin was published on the front page with enlarged views of the amethyst head and the claw that gripped it.

Other papers followed suit at once, and the pin at last reached the eyes of the little up-town shopkeeper who had made it himself from an amethyst out of a bracelet and a claw on an old watch-fob.

The portrait of Merithew that accompanied the portrait of the pin in the newspapers reminded him of the stranger who had bought it. He began also to recall the features of the pretty girl who had often paused to gaze in at his window.

Greatly excited, he made haste to thumb over the pages of his day-books. He had to go back almost a year before he found the entry of the sale.

About this time also the slow-witted janitor of the apartment-house where Perry had nested Maryla for a while, woke up to the resemblance of the dead man's pictures to the face of the "Mr. Brown" who had leased an apartment and paid for it longer than he kept it. His wife remembered that Mrs. Brown had disappeared abruptly, leaving all her clothes, and that Mr. Brown had paid the colored maid a month's wages in lieu of notice. The maid had reveled in her leisure for a time, and later taken service with another tenant.

Mrs. Janitor found a portrait of Mrs. Merithew in one of the papers, and her unlikeness to "Mrs. Brown" was complete. The janitor decided that they had better suppress the incident for the good name of the house, but the janitrix would talk, and one of the tenants sold his gossip to the *Gazette*.

Before long Hallard was there on the ground. Before long he was talking with the colored maid, Martha. He learned that Mrs. Brown's first name was "Maryla," and

that a strange Jew had called upon her the last day of her presence there, and had left a bag full of ribbons and pretty clothes. Martha had found them on the floor the next morning.

Hallard had already heard Maryla's name mentioned in Orchard Street. On the day of the discovery of Merithew's body he had spoken to her father, who lived in the very tenement. The old man had said that Maryla was dead, but at the name of Merithew his grief had changed to wrath, and he had closed the door in Hallard's face.

But Hallard chuckled now. New doors were opening for him everywhere. He had but to find this Maryla and he could make the police look foolish, for they were still in search of the fugitive Red Ida and the well-concealed Aphra Shaler.

It took a vast amount of questioning and false-clue following, but Hallard was indefatigable. He did not pause for food or sleep or even for a shave. He ran among the multitudinous trails of New York like a fanatic beagle, red-eyed and bristling; but he was not giving tongue.

Before long he burst into Dutilh's shop and caused a panic among the birds-of-paradise. He asked for the girl named Maryla and said he had important news for her.

She had not been seen in the shop for three days. Hallard's half-eyebrow drew down over one sly eye as he realized that the picture of the hat-pin had been published three days before.

Dutilh was in Europe buying clothes, and Mrs. Shenstone was difficult; but at length Hallard browbeat her into giving him Maryla's latest address, as well as her earlier ones.

When he arrived, panting, at the boarding-house where Maryla had last resided according to the Dutilh address-book, he learned that she had paid her bill and left there, carrying all her property in a suit-case and a bundle, on

the very day before Perry Merithew was found on the roof.

And there the trail ended. Hallard stood sniffing the air and whining like a beagle that has followed a warm trail to the border of a stream in a swamp.

All the clue he had now was a mental portrait of Maryla gathered from the more or less contradictory descriptions he had wheedled out of the Dutilhettes. So far as he could find, no photograph of her existed.

He made a trip to Orchard Street and invaded the home of the Sokalskis with further pretenses of news to Maryla's advantage. But all he learned was that, so far as they knew, the girl had never given her image to a camera.

That was a matter of small difficulty to a newspaper. Hallard told the art editor about Maryla and her Polish blood, and the editor dug out the familiar alleged portrait of the Countess Potocka and had it somewhat doctored with more recent clothes and coiffure. It did not represent Maryla at all. But neither does it represent the Countess Potocka.

Hallard felt toward the police of New York as the detective of literature feels toward Scotland Yard. He loved to show them up and expose their befuddled fatuities trying to rescue the commonwealth from the penalty of their blunders. Easily he showed them up, but when it came to an offer of substitutes in the Merithew case the rub began.

By a series of calculations he satisfied himself at least that there were about one hundred thousand red-headed women in the city. His task was the mere elimination of ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine, leaving the guilty solitaire. It looked easier than it was. It was another of the cases where the rôle of critic on a rock is pleasanter than that of diver in the wreck.

Hallard plunged with great enthusiasm into the subject of hair and its importance in identification. He

read what he could find out about it in dictionaries and cyclopædias. But it left him with new puzzles, as learning always does.

He visited the Public Library, the marble storage warehouse of infinite human lore. He smiled with anticipation at the countless pigeonholes full of drawers full of title-cards.

He took out the drawer containing the names of the books on hair. There were many, many on the structure of hair in animal and man, a disgusting number on the methods of preserving the hair from the evils of emigration and hostile attack; the manipulation, architectonics, and landscape-gardening of it; histories of the art of coiffure; the chemistry of changing and restoring its natural tints.

He learned that there are various great races of hairs, according to its cross-section: the cylindrical hair, which is straight and flat and grows upon Mongols, Malays, and Redskins; the elliptical, which is curly and flourishes on the Indo-German races, the Australians, and Polynesians; and the flattened, bean-shaped hair, which kinks upon the negro skulls.

But he could find nothing that showed how to tell a hair from one person's head from a hair from another person's head.

He found many titles in other languages, but Hallard knew only English—if that. At length he called in the aid of an interpreter, a seedy scholar, who knew everything except how to make as much as ten dollars a week. With this help he found among the *Archives des Sciences Biologiques* published in St. Petersburg (so Petrograd was called in 1900) an *Étude médico-lgéale sur les Poils*, by M. G. S. London.

This treatise explained how to make sure first that a hair was a hair, then how to distinguish animal hair from human, how to guess, more or less accurately, from what part of the body it had come, how to tell whether a hair had

fallen out or been combed out or pulled out, and whether it was natural or gray, and the methods of artificially changing its color with the water of Javelle.

But there the demonstration stopped.

Hallard had no doubt whatever that the hair in Perry Merithew's fingers came from the head of a woman. There was enough of it to know that she was not of a black, a yellow, or a red race.

He cut one of the precious hairs through and studied it with a microscope. It was elliptical and was therefore Polynesian, Australian, or Indo-German. Hallard wondered who the Indo-Germans were, till he learned that he was one himself.

His shabby assistant dragged from the shelves another recondite treatise published in Leipzig in 1911. It wore the long-haired title, "Concerning hair-injuries and the post-mortem alterations of hair in their legal bearing" (*"Ueber Haar-verletzungen und über die postmortalen Veränderungen der Haaren in forensischen Beziehung*). This promised well in the translation, but Dr. Walter Röttger was interested chiefly in the resistance of hair to time, and he triumphantly announced that hair could last a thousand years under favorable circumstances. Hallard was of to-day; yesterday was almost as uninteresting as its own newspapers. And he left the library with small respect for its moldy tomes.

Some day when he had time he would expose it.

As he ran down the uselessly numerous front steps he realized that he had come round by a long journey from the place he had started from.

What he had learned the detective bureau had already known and used. The police were relying still on the magnificent old method of arresting everybody that could be suspected, and subjecting the prisoner to whatever inquisition they could devise.

CHAPTER LXVI

AFTER Worthing left Muriel he suddenly remembered her little gesture of repulsion when the maid offered to take down her hair. It would have meant nothing under other circumstances, and he would not let it mean anything now. He would not disgrace his brain by thinking of such rubbish.

But a little later he was thinking of it again. The papers were clamorous with the puzzle of the copper-haired woman. Muriel's hair might be called copper-colored. She knew Merithew. She knew that building in Orchard Street. Worthing himself had gone there with her. Why might not Merithew have gone there? It was disloyal to admit the possibility, yet he could not unthink his thoughts.

Why had she hidden her hair under that lace cap? Wasn't that a new way she had of doing up her hair?

The questions nagged him like gnats returning as fast as they were struck away. But his love of her kept pace with his suspicions. Suppose it had been Muriel? Suppose she had gone to the Sokalski tenement? Surely it was on some good errand, as she had gone before. She could not have intended to murder Merithew. There could have been no possible premeditation or malice.

His hands had clenched in the hair of the woman, whoever she was. If the woman killed him then it must have been in self-defense. That might have been the case with the proud, impulsive, clean-souled Muriel he knew. If Merithew had attempted to play the usual Merithew

with her she would probably have killed him. And a good job, too!

But how could Muriel have gone from even the legitimate execution of Merithew to the consolation of his wife? That seemed more nearly impossible than anything else. This convinced him that his suspicions were insane. Yet they came buzzing back.

Why did she recoil when her hair was threatened with a touch? This query ran through his head like a stubborn popular tune. In self-defense he busied himself with a theory that perhaps Merithew had not been killed at all. The papers said so. But who believed the papers? The papers said the surgeons said so. But it takes a surgeon to know what mistakes surgeons make.

Worthing felt a curiosity to make sure for himself. Having been an ambulance rider at Bellevue, he had made the acquaintance of many hospital authorities, of police surgeons, and of the coroner. It would not be hard for him to get access to the body itself. He resolved to talk at once with the man who had made the first examination on the tenement roof. He would call on him casually and question him. If he could not find out something to acquit Muriel of his suspicions, he might at least gain some knowledge to protect her with if she were guilty.

The word "guilty" shocked him like a sacrilege. Whatever she had done, it was no fit word for her.

Worthing was of the all-merciful school of science, and he felt rather sorry than angry toward all criminals. By how much more should he be pitiful toward the girl he loved. He simply could not believe that Muriel killed Merithew. And he simply could not banish the thought that she was somehow involved in his death.

Her face came back to him. Those eyes of hers had the sorrowfulest, loneliest gaze he had ever seen; her lips striving to smile had twitched and paled with fright, and her chin had quivered like the chin of a little girl trying not to cry.

She needed help, and by the Lord he would help her. His skill as a physician might prove a more potent weapon than all the swords of all the heroes or all the gold of Winnie Nicolls.

By a little adroit telephoning he found out the name of the hospital that sent the ambulance to Orchard Street, and the name of the interne in charge of it. He had known young Dr. Arnold at Johns Hopkins. He dropped in on him and asked him for the address of an old crony of theirs. After a little idle gossip he made to leave, then turned back to say, carelessly:

"Did you read about this Merithew case?"

"Did I?" Arnold laughed. "I wrote it. I was the first surgeon on the roof."

"Is that so?" said Worthing. "I didn't see your name in the papers. Did they get the story right?"

"Do they ever? No!"

"Where were they wrong?"

"Everywhere. In the description of the position of the body, the condition, the wounds. Every paper gave a different story and every one was false. For instance, they all spoke of the pools of blood. There was really very little, surprisingly little."

"Is that so? Could I have a look at the victim, do you suppose?"

"Sure. He's in an undertaker's shop waiting for the family to claim him after the coroner gets through."

It was a cold-blooded business with these men, but Worthing's heart was hot enough when he entered the dingy shop in whose back room Perry Merithew was ironically installed. The fat and amiable undertaker motioned Worthing in and left him alone.

Worthing had seen Perry last in the sunlit ocean. He had regarded him with angry jealousy. Now his rival seemed helpless enough, as far as possible from being handsome, or rich, or merry. But was he clinging still to Muriel? Was there no way to extract the secrets from

those lips congealed together? Merry Perry would answer no questions vocally, but Worthing cross-examined him in his own way.

When he came out of the room, the physician deputized by the coroner had just returned from his luncheon. He demanded by what authority Worthing was there. Worthing explained that he had been called in to attend Mrs. Merithew, and had wished to be able to tell her definitely the cause of her husband's demise.

The man was so curt that Worthing went direct to the coroner, and asked his opinion with more deference than he felt for the office.

"It's pretty clear," said the coroner, "that he died of a fracture of the skull from a blow with a blunt instrument."

"I don't think so," said Worthing.

"You don't, don't you? And why not?"

"The fractures I find in the skull are serious, but not enough to cause death. If he had been killed with a blow there would have been a very great effusion of blood. As a matter of fact, there was very little. Wouldn't that indicate that his heart had stopped before he was struck? I opened his eyelids; the pupils were dilated unequally. Wouldn't that suggest an internal hemorrhage of the brain?"

"Don't ask me. Tell me."

"I'm telling you."

"What in thunder do you think did kill him?"

"Apoplexy. I believe that an examination will show little clots in the basal ganglia in the region of the floor of the fourth ventricle."

"What could have brought it on?"

"Some big shock. Some overwhelming emotion. I believe it was a stroke of the type called *foudroyant*."

"What was he doing on that roof?"

"That's more than I know. It must have taken some terrific crisis to get him there."

"Apoplexy, eh? Do you know that Merithew had any apoplectic history?"

"No; but you know what his life has been. He looked pretty seedy when I saw him yesterday."

"You saw him yesterday—where?"

"At Long Beach. He was dancing with a girl in a bathing-suit."

"He would be. Who was she?"

"I don't know her name. Her face was familiar, though."

"The late extras mention his affair with Aphra Shaler."

"That's who it was. I remember her now perfectly."

"She's skipped the bailiwick, scooted to New Jersey. The police are after her."

"She never killed him."

"How do you know?"

"She had light blond hair. I noticed it on the beach."

"Did you see him with any other girl—any copper-haired beauty?"

"No."

Worthing said it calmly. Physicians have to learn to lie with deftness. But he began to shudder with a new dread. He just remembered that Perry Merithew had been on the float when Muriel asked Worthing to call for her that evening. Merithew had overheard the invitation. After Worthing had said how sorry he was that he had another engagement and had swum away, perhaps she had invited Merithew to call.

The plausibility of this hurt Worthing excruciatingly. It helped to confirm the infernal suspicion. Perhaps some one else on the crowded float had heard them make an engagement, and would come forward to testify.

The one service he could render her was to attack the theory of murder. He said to the coroner:

"Look here, old man. A lot of people are in favor of abolishing your office altogether. They say it's a useless waste of time and money. You've got a chance to make

a ten-strike. Before you send Merithew back to his family, you have his brain and heart removed, and send them to an expert. Nobody needs to know if the autopsy proves what the papers say. But if it proves that Merithew died of a stroke instead of a weapon, you can turn a neat trick on the detectives and the reporters."

The idea interested the much-maligned official, and he agreed to act upon it. Worthing lingered till he heard the instructions telephoned to an eminent specialist.

Then he went back up-town to the Schuyler house to see his patient and to question her. He learned that she had gone to the country. He called at the Merithew home to inquire of the widow's condition. He learned that the regular family physician had arrived and taken control.

Worthing dawdled away, listless and useless. Nobody seemed to need him. He had nearly had two patients and now he had none.

CHAPTER LXVII

THE Schuyler country place contained in itself nearly every resource for diversion; it was a palace in the midst of a farm on the edge of the water. There were wildernesses and shorn lawns, solitude and the telephone. There were swimming, yachting, canoeing, tennis, polo, horses, cattle, gardening, books, dances, cards, motoring, motor-boating—not far away there was even an aviation field.

When the yacht brought Muriel to her home some man was flying his new hydro-aeroplane. He rose from the water and soared till he was above the upper rim of the sun, whose lower rim was just cutting the horizon.

It was like the apotheosis of a man leaving earth for heaven. Muriel remembered that Perry Merithew had ridden a hydro-aeroplane that day when he had sailed over the yacht and she had first paid any heed to him, and she had paid heed to him then chiefly because her father had warned her against him. He had escaped alive from all the perils of the air and she had killed him. Now she was returning from town with guilt on her soul, and another man was flying above the yacht. Or was it Perry's ghost?

She wondered what had become of his soul. It was frightful that he should have been plunged into eternity without a moment's warning. Did one go to hell the way a broken airship falls? Where was hell? Since he died in sin, he must have gone straight there. Or did one go up to heaven first for judgment? or wait in the grave till the one great day?

She wondered what hell was really like. Different preachers differed so hopelessly. Most of them ignored it altogether. Some said it was actual fire and burning, and some said it was just a state of mind. Whatever it was, she wished she could call poor Mr. Merithew out of it.

She wondered if he knew that she had not meant to kill him—only to break free from his arms, which he had no right to put around her; and to escape the kiss he had no right to force upon her—he with so sweet a wife.

Muriel wished that she might get word to poor Mr. Merithew about his wife's grief for him and about her own regret. But theology was so far beyond her that it was the least of her troubles, as it is the least of the troubles of her generation.

Every other emotion of the girl's seemed to be at its maximum: remorse, terror, love, tenderness, the horror of death, the beauty of the world, the dread of disgrace, the devotion to her home and her parents.

She tried all the diversions, but they only wearied her. She could get no lilt into her athleticism, no sincerity into her conversation, no opportunity for her charity or her hilarity. Those fleet impulses of hers were few now, and desperate, and they must be repressed.

Life was a hopeless alternation of abysmal glooms and of heart-throttling panics. Life was a waste of pains. She would be glad to be dead. Only her love of her people, her anguished longing not to cause anybody else any more sorrow, kept her from self-destruction.

She was afraid to be so far from the city. She wanted to go back to the roof and see if she had not left some clue there that she might snatch up before the police found it. She wanted to be where she could buy every extra edition while it was still damp from the press, so that she could keep watch on the detectives.

Yet when she was recalled to the city she was afraid to be near.

The recall came in the most uncanny way. She was alone on a dark piazza. The moon shining through a haze made everything weird. She was trying to persuade herself that Perry Merithew was alive and she was innocent. On the pool little mists were floating like the trailing garments of wraiths in a whispering conspiracy. She was afraid to stay where she was, and afraid to cross the piazza to the door. Then a servant's voice spoke suddenly out of the dark:

"You are wanted on the telephone, please."

"Who is it?"

"Mr. Perry Merithew."

It was like a ghostly summons, and she was assailed with an ague of fright. She answered:

"I thought Mr. Merithew was d-dead?"

"Oh yes, Miss. This is the young Mr. Merithew."

She smiled ironically, remembering: the king is dead, long live the king. She dragged herself to the telephone and heard the youthful mimicry of the father's voice:

"Is that you, Miss Muriel? Hope I haven't torn you away from cards or something pleasant. Fact is, tomorrow is the funeral of my poor old dad. The little mother's awfully cut up, of course. She's taken no end of a shine to you. She wondered if you would be angel enough to come and help her through. It's a lot to ask. But you've been so good to the other poor people, maybe you would take pity on her. Do you think you could?"

"Of course! Of course!"

"That's wonderful of you. God b-bless you, Miss Muriel."

He was crying. That set her to crying. He was the boy trying to walk like a man, and his load was too big and too sudden. And Muriel was a girl too abruptly flung into womanhood.

The funeral celebration was a mingling of profound grief and outrageous sensationalism. Crowds fought

their way into the church and mobbed the police outside, till it was hard for them to open a lane wide enough to let the family through, and the coffin.

Perry Merithew went down the aisle under a great mantle of violets, to music that throbbed enormously in the air. His widow and his son and the nearest relatives followed in densest black like paupers. They did not know that Perry's heart and brain were not in the casket with the rest of him. Perry's heart and brain had not usually been with his family.

Muriel walked with the household, and wore black with them. The almost unendurable solemnity and mystery of the ritual and the music overwhelmed her, but she seemed to be like some new and well-built ship that weathers every storm the sea and sky and wind and lightning can wreak upon it, plunges to every trough, but somehow climbs out to every crest; makes the worst of every blast, but emerges, always.

That was what Mrs. Merithew tried to tell Muriel in the black hours after Perry had been submitted to the earth:

"You have youth and hope and beauty and the future. Nothing matters for you. But it's all over for me. I'm an old woman with a fatherless boy to watch, and a scandal that I'll never live down. I have no ambition left and only one prayer—to find the woman that killed Perry and send her after him in worse disgrace. If God will grant me that, I won't ask anything else except forgiveness for poor Perry."

Something impelled Muriel to say: "Do you think you ought to mix prayers for revenge with prayers for forgiveness? Don't you think revenge is out of date? Don't you think you ought to leave the woman to the law?"

"I'll leave her to the law, never fear!" Mrs. Merithew muttered. "If I can find her! And I think I have her name already!"

Muriel was too startled to gasp. She simply looked the question that Mrs. Merithew answered:

"Pet Bettany."

Muriel almost laughed at the surprising folly of this. "How on earth did you come to think of her?"

"In going over some old check-books of my husband's the detectives found two or three he had made to her."

"Oh, Pet was always borrowing from everybody right and left, and she never paid. Didn't her mother get a few checks, too?"

"Two or three."

"Then you can't accuse Pet."

"No? What about this letter? She sent it to him at his club; he never got it; it was turned over to us." She thrust into Muriel's hand this note:

PERRY DARLING,—I was a beast to treat you so outrageously. But you know that wolf-temper of mine. I'm not really to blame. I inherited it with my other faults. When I'm jealous I simply go blind with rage and don't know what I'm saying.

You were an old dear to me, and I'll promise to behave if you'll take me out again. Please telephone. I'll wait at home till I hear from you.

PET.

"What have you to say to that?" Mrs. Merithew demanded.

"Only what you said, that he never got it," Muriel ventured.

"But she could have reached him by telephone, no doubt, at another club."

"Anyway, she hasn't copper-colored hair," Muriel urged in a panic, wondering how she could save Pet without imperiling herself.

"She dyed her hair auburn not long ago," Mrs. Merithew persisted.

"But she would never have gone into the slums with him. Why should she? She had no motive. Besides, she wouldn't have taken his money, his watch, his pearl."

"That may have only been a blind to throw suspicion off the track."

"Oh, in Heaven's name, don't accuse her till you are sure!" Muriel pleaded. "It would be a frightful thing. You'd never forgive yourself. Don't give your heart up to revenge. Turn your thoughts to mercy, for your poor husband's sake, and your own. If Pet had done this thing her hair would show it. Make sure that it does before you give her over to the police and the newspapers. She and her mother have all the trouble they can stand. You must be careful."

Muriel was so overwrought that Mrs. Merithew yielded, more to appease her than for any other reason. She promised to take no action until she had corroboration for her theory. But she kept the letter.

Seeing how exhausted Muriel was, she forbade her to stay longer and sent her to her own home. There she found Pet Bettany.

Pet had repented her quarrel with Merithew in a morning-after misery. She had wakened that day with more than a headache. She had looked about the house where she and her mother were beleaguered.

Poverty was round them like a moat, and the city was in the hands of the enemy, the army of creditors. There was merrymaking in the town and beyond its walls. Perry had given her safe-conduct and escort through the lines. He was her only friend, and she had insulted him with imbecile lack of tact. It was bad business.

She tried to reach him by telephone without success. Then she sent a note to his club and waited at home for him.

Perry had not called for her that night. She had spent the long, lone evening in the dark, hot house, fuming against him.

Her mother had gone out that evening with an old beau she had tried to refurbish. The old beau had taken

Mrs. T. J. B. to dinner and to a theater, and a roof-dance afterward. The prodigal mother had come home at a late hour.

Pet bitterly resented Perry's absence till she read his perfect excuse in the next afternoon's head-lines.

She had thought, "If he had called on me as I asked him to, he would be alive now."

She told her mother about it. Her mother was immediately alarmed.

"Good Lord! dear, suppose they accused you? How would you prove you weren't with him? The servants had gone to bed, and I was out. What proof have you? Why, even I don't know that you were here! Were you here?"

Pet saw in her mother's eyes a look that appalled her. "My God!" she cried, "you don't suspect me?"

"Of course not, my child; and yet it is queer, isn't it? Suppose they asked me where you were? I couldn't swear you were home, could I? They could prove that I was away myself, couldn't they?"

There was a kind of perfunctory loyalty in her mother's tone that terrified Pet. If her own mother could think her capable of such a crime, what would other people think?

She knew that her reputation was not beyond cavil. She knew that she had enemies; she had been proud of them, their number and importance. They had given zest to life. Now she realized that enemies are liabilities and friends are assets.

Pet delivered a tirade against her mother that convinced Mrs. T. J. B. of one thing particularly—that her daughter had an ungovernable temper. Mrs. T. J. B. made the most astonishing comment:

"Pet, my dear, you've really got to learn to control yourself. You look as if you could kill me, too."

"Too?" Pet gasped. "Too? Then you do believe—"

"I believe nothing," screamed Mrs. T. J. B., "except that we've got to raise some money somewhere."

"You'd better telephone your new old beau."

"They discontinued the telephone this morning."

This was serious. The enemy had cut the cables. Pet thought and thought. If only Perry were alive! She had been nursing him along. The thought of Perry brought the thought of Muriel Schuyler.

The name flashed up in her gloom with the sudden brilliance of a lettered electric sign. Pet had not frightened Perry into paying over any money recently, but perhaps Muriel would be easier. She had had mysterious dealings with Perry, and people who had had mysterious dealings with Perry were doing their best to keep them dark just now.

Also Muriel had copper-colored hair. What a pistol that was to hold at her head! Pet would pretend to believe her guilty, and threaten to tell the police of her transactions with Perry. Muriel would naturally come down handsomely to suppress even a whisper.

And then Pet quivered under the shock of an appalling notion—perhaps Muriel was the guilty woman. Why not? The mere thought was so impossible that there might be something in it. Pet's cynical soul reached the truth as geniuses sometimes reach it—by arguing with false logic from false premises.

Pet went out and telephoned to Muriel at the town house, but learned that she was in the country; Pet could not afford the trip. Later she went to the funeral. That was free. She saw Muriel there. The fact that she was with Mrs. Merithew quickened the suspicions of Pet.

She went to the Schuyler home and waited. She waited for hours before Muriel came in and greeted her with amazement.

The two had never been friends, though they had been acquaintances almost from cradle days. It puzzled Muriel to think that she had just been defending Pet, and now found her at her own home.

"Hello, Pet!" she said, with difficult cordiality. "Sorry to have kept you waiting."

"Hello, Muriel! It doesn't matter."

"Sit down, do."

"Thanks. I'll keep you only a moment." There was a silence. Pet was looking at Muriel's hair. Muriel caught the glance. It put her instantly on her guard. Her heart began to hammer with alarm. At length Pet began to speak.

"Terrible thing about poor Perry, wasn't it?"

"Terrible."

"Especially sad for you. You knew him so well."

"Did I?" said Muriel.

"Didn't you? I used to see you dancing with him."

"Only once, I think—at the Yacht Club."

"I saw him give you money then."

"You did?" Muriel laughed. Here was a chance to say a word in Perry's favor. "Oh, that! Did you see that? It was funny. I had asked my father for some money for a little Italian boy who was kidnapped."

"Did he live in Orchard Street?"

Pet leaped at the question so eagerly that Muriel understood her a little more. She answered, calmly:

"No, he lived in Batavia Street, way down near the Brooklyn Bridge. My father wouldn't give me the money to ransom him. Mr. Merithew was at the office. He said he'd give it to me if he could borrow it. He telephoned over that he'd give it to me if I paid for it with a dance. So I did. It was foolish of me, but his money saved the boy and it's saving other people still. Father was furious when I told him."

Pet stuck to the point. "Once you got him interested in charity, you persuaded him to go to the slums with you, I suppose, or didn't you?"

"Never," Muriel answered. It is easy to lie when a direct question is put. Pet returned to the attack from another direction.

"When you were kidnapped Perry saved you, didn't he?"

"Yes," said Muriel. It was pleasant to tell the truth.

"You kept it out of the papers."

"Naturally. Who likes to be in the papers?"

"How did it happen that Perry happened to be the man?"

"You know that as well as I do. You were with him when the word came. Winnie Nicolls was with you. He told me you knew all about it. Winnie tried to rescue me, too, and so did Dr. Worthing. Mr. Merithew happened to succeed."

"But why were you so anxious to keep out of sight? Why did you leave for Europe right away? Why did Perry follow you over? Why was he always so eloquent in your praise?"

"Why are you asking me all these questions about the poor fellow?"

The pity in Muriel's eyes at the mention of his name did more to persuade Pet of Muriel's innocence than any open plea could have done. It was another of the instances where womanly intuition leaps to the wrong conclusion. Muriel repeated her question, coldly:

"Why are you asking me all these questions?"

"Oh, I was just curious," Pet mumbled, disconcerted.

Muriel's heart hardened. "Are you trying to solve the mystery?"

"In a way."

"And you came here to convince yourself that I was guilty of such a hideous crime?"

The sincerity of Muriel's horror again undermined Pet's assurance. Her evident confusion emboldened Muriel. She laughed harshly.

"Do you think that I killed the poor man?"

"Oh no! no! Of course not."

"Oh yes, of course so," Muriel mocked her. Then she spoke without mercy. "Miss Bettany, you might be

in better business than this. If you start to throwing suspicion around some of it might fall on yourself."

"On me!" Pet cried, but weakly, remembering her mother's curious manner.

Muriel pushed the charge. "Mr. Merithew was killed in the heart of the slums. The police say he was robbed. They are looking for the thief among the thieves. If you begin to hint that some one in his own set took him down there and killed him, you may set the police on your own track."

"How dare you!" Pet stormed. "As if I couldn't prove that I wasn't with him!"

"But can you?" Muriel ventured. She took a wild chance, and she saw that it scored. She went after Pet like a boxer who has landed a lucky blow. "You may not know that the letter you wrote Mr. Merithew fell into his wife's hands. It speaks of your blind temper. Mrs. Merithew showed me that note this afternoon. The poor woman wanted to have you arrested. I used my influence to quiet her. I told her that whatever else you were capable of, you couldn't commit murder. She referred to the fact that you had recently painted your hair a rich copper color."

Pet could not endure the sublime injustice of this. "My hair?" she shrieked. "My hair is my alibi! Do you want to see it?" She was taking off her hat.

Muriel checked her. "Don't insult me by thinking I'm as suspicious as you are. I don't believe for one minute that you are guilty. I only say that you'd better not begin to juggle heavy weights for fear you might drop one on your own toe. You mustn't forget that only a night or two before Mr. Merithew's death you were seen with him in a restaurant. You quarreled with him outrageously. It was very uncomfortable for the rest of us. The waiters were in ecstasies and the head waiter was in despair. Mr. Nicolls and his aunt and my father and Doctor Worthing were there with me."

Pet's desperation rekindled her anger. "I offered to show you my hair to prove that none of it was cut off. Will you show me yours?"

Muriel stared at her with disdain. "Certainly not. Of all the astounding impertinences I ever heard of! If you'll bring a policeman I'll show him. But at the same time I'll have to mention your note to poor Mr. Merithew and your ferocious quarrel with him, and your little effort to throw suspicion on me. Perhaps the hair wasn't your own. What if it was a transformation? Many women do wear transformations. Perhaps the woman that killed him had one on. Perhaps the hair they found in his hands was false."

If Pet had never before had the feeling of murder in her heart she felt it now. She could have flown at Muriel and torn her face to shreds. But Muriel was an athlete of well-known prowess and Muriel was calm and ready for her. Muriel at bay was developing the cunning of despair.

The most disgusting thing about Pet's cyclones of rage was that they usually ended in rain. She was so helpless now that she broke down and wept. Her tears softened Muriel as nothing else could have done. But she completed her conquest before she yielded to mercy.

"You were speaking about the money you saw Mr. Merithew give me. What about the money he gave you? Mrs. Merithew has the checks."

Pet wanted to roll off the chair to the floor under this final shame. But Muriel was saying:

"Everybody knows that you and your mother have been awfully hard pressed, and people have said you have been living by your wits. It just occurs to me that your real reason for coming to see me was to scare me into paying you something, now that poor Mr. Merithew is out of your reach? Is that true?"

Pet wailed like a banshee at this, but it convinced Muriel. She felt a deep sorrow for her. She had heard

much of the poverty of the once-rich. She put her hand on Pet's shoulder. Pet shook it off with a snarl, but Muriel was not to be thwarted.

"Listen, my dear," she said in a soft voice, "you couldn't have had any other reason. You must have been terribly hard pressed to think of it. You must need money awfully. I'm going to give you some. Will you take it?"

"No, no, no, no!" Pet howled.

"I'm going to give it to you, anyway," Muriel said. "My father gave me a hundred dollars to get some flowers for poor Mr. Merithew's funeral. I telephoned for them and had them charged. I've got the cash here. You'll take it, won't you? Please! He would have liked you to take it."

Pet shook her head frantically, but Muriel took money from her own handbag and transferred it to Pet's. Pet hardly knew it.

"I can give you more when you need it," Muriel said, feeling a strange rapture in the ultimate luxury of returning good for evil. And the triumphant canniness of bribing a dangerous pursuer was strangely admixed with her charity.

Pet was thinking bitter thoughts in the hiding of her shut eyes, but the talisman of that hundred dollars was irresistible. Her pride had died long ago. She had taken money on far less honorable terms. Muriel was rich. And Muriel made it easy by pretending to let her pretend that she did not know it was there. So she refused again to accept it, but did not eject it from her handbag.

When she opened her bloodshot, tear-stained eyes, she was like a wildcat that has fought in vain against the gentleness of a trapper who feeds it and lets it go.

Her escape was conveniently facilitated by the arrival of a purblind servant who announced, "Miss Sokalska."

Muriel nodded. Pet mopped her eyes angrily with a dripping handkerchief. Muriel handed her a dry one, and said:

Pet had forgotten to say "Thank you!" but

expected of untamed animals given their liberty.

"Won't you stay and meet her?"

Which was equivalent to saying, "Of course you won't." Pet shook her head and hurried out as Maryla came in.

Pet had forgotten to say "Thank you," but it is not expected of untamed animals given their liberty.

CHAPTER LXVIII

MURIEL'S victory over Pet Bettany was so vital to her, and she had won it at such expense of conscience, that she hardly noticed Maryla till Pet was gone. She was ready to sink down with battle-fag, but the sight of Maryla revived her.

For Maryla carried her baby in her arms. There was a beatitude in Maryla's eyes now, and pride in place of shame in her carriage. And the baby at her breast was chortling "Home, Sweet Home" in the original version.

A gurgle of laughter caught Muriel's ear first with instant contagion. Nothing could have made her laugh so well or so thoroughly as that irresistible origin of all laughter, the inarticulate contentment of a well-fed infant.

She rushed to Maryla with a cry of delight and robbed her of the child. Maryla was a rank novice as a matron, but she tried to look as wise as the mother of a dozen.

With the fine discrimination of infants, this baby, who owed the recovery of its mother to Muriel, decided that Muriel was something dangerous. It was frantically afraid of her and tried to wriggle from her grasp, emitting yelps of fear and flinging its hands out for rescue. Muriel had a superstitious feeling that the baby was mystically aware of her crime.

Maryla took back her own. She tried to comfort Muriel.

"Babies are always such. She cried so when foist I took her off the noisse she had by Foundlings."

"When did you go there for her?" Muriel asked.

"That same night you gave me such of a talking. And it was a good business for me."

"Why?"

"Because I am there that night Meesteh Merithew is died."

Muriel was startled. "What difference did that make to you?"

The infant had fallen asleep on its mother's bosom. Maryla, asking permission with a look, laid it down on a big divan and turned back to Muriel.

"Meesteh Merithew is the fadder of this bebby."

Muriel could not understand her till she had repeated it.

"Yes. I did not told you because you are friends by him like you are by me and everybody. But it is so. He is the fadder. He was the fadder."

Muriel gripped the arms of her chair lest the swirl of it cast her to the floor. Maryla talked on:

"If the policers should find me, I can make a proving that I am not on the roof that night."

"Why should the police look for you?"

"Oh, they will; they do now. Didn't you see the picture they print it in papers of the het-pin?"

"I saw that," Muriel said. "But I never knew whose it was—it wasn't yours?"

"Sure! It was the het-pin I showed you that time I am here for tea. I was telling you I wanted to stick it in the heart of that fadder."

"But you—you didn't kill him!"

"No," Maryla laughed. "I wanted it, but I could not found him. It is why I come to see you now. That pin in the papers is the pin I leaved here that day."

"You left it here!"

"Sure. I hand it to you. You put on table. I go away in a horry. Outside, I find I have no het-pin. I am afraid of that big man you have for your doorkeeper. I go on by Foundlings."

"You left the pin here?" Muriel pondered. "But I left it on the table. I never saw it again."

"No, not you." Maryla lowered her voice. "It is why I am here. Somebody in this house did take that pin, maybe. That Merithew is bad man by young goils. I am thinking some soivant-goil there is in your house and he makes love by her like by me. And she kills him, maybe. So I come to tell you to tell her to look out.

"If policers arrest me, I must tell it is not me. For I cannot die now for somebody else. I have my bebby. But I don't want nobody else to die for that bad man. It is enough that he dies like he should ought to have died before he makes so many young goils bad without making more yet."

Muriel began to understand. She remembered that when Perry Merithew invited her to take the 'bus-ride with him she had put her hat on in the dark. She had caught up two hat-pins from her dressing-table. On the roof there he had taken them out when he lifted her hat from her hair. Afterward she had tried to reach one of them in vain. When she saw the hat-pin pictured in the newspapers it had meant nothing to her but a blind clue. Now she was convinced that it was Maryla's hat-pin that she had worn. And Maryla had come to tell her. And Maryla was— Muriel had killed the father of Maryla's child!

She could not carry everything. She collapsed in her chair with a groan of surrender, and began to weep in craven helplessness.

Maryla, overjoyed at being able to help her from whom she had had so much help, gathered her into her arms to comfort her. But Muriel pushed her away.

"You mustn't touch me. Not you. But I didn't mean to harm you when I—when I— I didn't know that he was the man. I didn't know. You didn't tell me."

She could not say it. She did not need to. Maryla

understood. The blow felled her to her knees. She clung to the arm of Muriel's chair and whispered questions that Muriel answered. Now it was not Maryla who groveled and Muriel who comforted, but *vice versa.*

Muriel told her the whole story. For all the shame, it was glorious to tell it, even to this girl; especially to this victim of her act. At last the secret was expressed, the cinder was out of her eye, the splinter out of her palm, the fish-bone out of her throat. There is no greater happiness granted mankind than this first free moment of relief.

The problems of the future were unchanged—increased, perhaps, because she had exposed her guilt. But she could draw a few deep breaths at least.

Muriel belonged to the class that used the police and the law for its protection and convenience. Maryla belonged to the class that they abused and cowed. To Maryla the police were dangerous tyrants who drove push-cart owners from profitable stands, prevented children from playing, treated the poor with contempt and violence. It was legitimate and necessary to match one's wits against policers.

It was natural for her to sympathize with Muriel, to believe that she meant no harm, and that her first business was to escape from the consequences of what she could not help. Her reverence for Muriel made her believe that Muriel had not yielded to Perry Merithew's magnetic spell.

Maryla knew that roof, knew that ledge they had looked across, knew even the old box they had stood on. The fact that Muriel had entered the house in Maryla's behalf, in the hope of pleading with her father to take her back, was the final proof of Muriel's angelhood.

Maryla promised to save her at any cost. She resolved to save her if she had to sacrifice herself for her.

She told Muriel so, and begged her to feel safe from all danger.

"They will not catch me," she said; "but should they catch me, I got my proof. I was by Foundlings that night. And my bebby sleepink in my arm. And such a sleepink it was for me! the foist in how long I don't know. But only for you I should not have my bebby now. And besides, I am noisse to another little bebby whose mother was like me. She ran away, too, and did not come back yet. I am doing much good. I am very heppy.

"Should those policers catch me, don't you say nothink. I won't say nothink till it comes by court-house. Then I laugh and I say, 'Go esk Sister Superiors where I am that night.' Then those old judges look like a fool and they gotta let me go. If they don't let me go, then you shall take care of my bebby, yes! It should be right, too, that I soffer, for I wanted to kill that man and I did not. You did not want, but you did. If somebody's got a right to get a ponishment it is not you."

Muriel protested that the scheme was impossible, intolerable. But Maryla only laughed. She gathered her baby in her arms and went out, smiling.

Again Muriel went to the door with her. Maryla's last words were:

"Don't you be afraid of nobody. All comes right. You trost me. All comes right."

Muriel dined alone that evening in the big dining-room. She ravened after her food, for her strength had been drained in a dozen labors, and she had told somebody her secret.

She had no intention of letting Maryla bear her penalty. But she had gained a confidante and a promiser of help. That was much.

When she went to her room, however, and the long evening stretched before her and lost itself in an endless road of long evenings, sorrow resumed its possession of her. She could see nothing in her past that was pleasant,

and nothing in her future but guilt and solitude. And she could not get used to sorrow.

She heard the door-bell ring faintly. The police had arrived at last. Maryla had gone, and her father was in the country. They would take her away. She wondered where she could hide. She ran and locked the door as silently as she could. She waited a long, long while for the tap of a servant's knuckles, but it did not come. She wondered what dreadful conference was being held below. She imagined the protest the people of the household would make against the incursion of the police. She could see them thrust aside. She waited now for the door to be forced.

Still there was no sound. She could not bear the waiting. She must hear what was going on below. She tiptoed across the room, turned the key back stealthily, and the bolt, and opened the door with all gentleness. She peered through the crevice. There was no one in the upper hall. But the stairway was all alight.

She stepped out and stared at the glistening marble of the balustrade. There was a curious sound as of some animal creeping slowly up the stairway. There was a sound of heavy breathing.

Fascinated with terror, she drew near the well of the stairway. Just before she reached it she heard another sound, an incredible sound, as of some one snickering. Then came an explosion of boyish laughter, a loud tintinnabultaion like a bell rolling down-stairs.

She ran to the rail, marveling, and peered over. A young lad whose face she could not quite remember, yet almost remembered, was climbing slowly with some effort up Jacob's Ladder.

She stared, unbelieving. Then she ran to the head of the stairs. Her knees weakened and she sat down on the top step and put out her arms, crying:

"Happy! Happy Hanigan, is it you?"

The boy paused, and a look of disgust erased his huge

smile. He growled: "Aw, hell! I was hopin' to supprise you."

"It's you!" she laughed. "And how you did surprise me! And, oh, how straight you are! And all dressed up! Why, Happy, Happy!"

She ran down farther and caught him in her arms with hungry satisfaction. She was too blind with tears to see Clinton Worthing watching upward from the hall.

The situation was over-subtle for Happy. He had counted on being welcomed with a jubilee, not with such noisy sorrow.

"I tried to keep from laughin'," he apologized, "but de damn giggles bubbled out o' me like sody-worter."

Still she wept.

"If I'm bodderin' you, by bein' here, I guess I better beat it!" he said. "I told Dr. Woithin' he had a right to warn you I was comin'."

But Muriel clung to him all the harder, hampering him with the uncomfortable awkwardnesses of a woman's embrace. And she rumpled his sleek hair with her caresses. And she had not even commented on the details of his magnificent costume. And her tears soaked his cheeks with unbecoming salt.

The best she could find to say was: "You're my boy, aren't you, Happy? I've got you, anyway, haven't I? You're my boy. Say it!"

He grumbled: "Well, o' course I got a mudder already. But I 'ain't got no wife yet. Did you wait like I told you to?"

"Yes, I've waited," she sighed.

"I hope you won't mine waitin' awhile longer," Happy said. "I guess you gotta. Me newspaper business is swiped by now, I guess, and it takes time to build it up again. But I'm not crooked any longer. Watch me." He strutted along the wide steps of the stairs. "And I can take a deep breat' wit'out it hoitin' me." He puffed out his little partridge chest. "Huh! I should worry!"

Muriel's eyes, following his unshackled motions, saw Clinton Worthing at last.

"Clinton!" she exclaimed, and she ran down as he ran up. They met on the first great sweep of the stairway, and their hands gripped hard.

Happy watched them, then turned his back and said: "Go on and kiss him; I ain't lookin'."

The command came so pat upon her impulse that she almost obeyed it. Worthing was too confused to know what to say or do. So he said and did nothing.

Muriel led him into the living-room and asked him questions about Happy. She gave Happy a book of polar exploration, and he curled up on the big divan under the lamp and looked at pictures till he fell asleep.

He lay in the relaxed grace of all sleeping animals, and he was in such contrast with his former cruel misassembly that Muriel felt him to be almost a work of art. And he was, indeed, a masterpiece of the new living sculpture, surgery.

"Has his mother seen him?" she asked. "What did she say?"

"You ought to have heard her. She credited it all to you and me and her other patron saints. She would have had a pair of wings wished onto my shoulder-blades if I had not run away. And she puts you right up in the stars."

Muriel was mightily pleased and comforted. She had given one child a new life and an enlarged hope. If only she had not robbed one man of his life and all his hope! Even while her mouth was smiling her brows were knit with the old agony and the tears began to burn her eyes once more. She stared at Worthing with the most poignant regret of all.

She could see that he loved her, and she could have loved him if only that ghastly barrier of her deed had not walled them apart.

Then she realized that she had left off her lace cap

when she ran out to the stairs. In embracing Happy her hair had been disheveled. While she cried over him a thick strand of it slipped down along her shoulders.

As she began to put it up she saw that Worthing was staring at her. He turned pale. He must have seen the traces of the penknife in the two or three short strands that she had kept hidden hitherto.

Of all the men in the world, she would have chosen him last as the discoverer. And he had seen her ragged hair.

She could think of nothing to say. She had no strength to run. Her teeth chattered and she was shaken and jolted with queer spasmic shudders.

She waited, wavering and cowering, for him to speak. He was silent a long time; then his first words were:

"May I smoke?"

She nodded, her head dod-doddering ludicrously. Evi-evidently he had something very, very important to say—to say. When her father had s-something im-important to say, he al-alway-always li-lighted a cigar first.

CHAPTER LXIX

WORTHING'S deliberation was terrifying. He took a cigar from one pocket, a match-box from another, selected a match with care, lighted it, let it burn almost out, then put it to his cigar and brought the cigar to a glow, then rose and moved about, looking for a place to drop the match. Then he walked to the divan where Happy slept, and sauntered to the two doors and looked into the hall and into the drawing-room. Then he walked to Muriel and said in a low voice:

"Are you interested in Perry Merithew, or has all the newspaper sensation tired you out?"

"What do you mean?" she whispered.

He gazed at her with eyes of all tenderness and said: "While the police and the reporters are looking for the woman who killed him, I have just learned that he was not killed at all. He died of apoplexy."

Muriel sprang to her feet with a little moan like a gush of blood. "Oh, thank God! Thank God!" Then she fell forward. His arms saved her and upheld her.

When she was somewhat restored she began to tremble again, and to babble: "Why do you say that? How could you know? Who told you? How could they tell?"

He told her of his investigation, his reasons, his talk with the coroner. He had visited the laboratory of the expert that afternoon. To-morrow the expert would report the result of his findings to the coroner in confidence.

"What he will do, or the police, I don't know."

"What does it matter what they do?" Muriel said. "The one wonderful thing is that he was not killed."

Worthing did not ask her why this meant so much to her. He smoked while she sat pondering the miracle of release from sin, breathing the pure air of blood-guiltlessness. That was enough for a while.

At length he said, less from curiosity than from a desire to be of use to her: "Of course the police will still be interested in knowing who was with him, who robbed him of his valuables."

"He wasn't robbed," Muriel whispered. "He gave them—of his own free will—for charity."

He did not ask her how she knew this. He was too busy with the jealous pangs of hearing her attribute benevolence to the man. It was not easy to browbeat himself out of a bitter resentment; but he was determined to help her all he could. He went on, his voice colder than his heart was:

"The police will want to know what brought on the stroke of apoplexy, and why the man was beaten over the head, and what the weapon was, and how and why the woman got away, and who she was?"

Both of them sat staring at the floor for a long while, before she turned her eyes to him and he turned his to her. Then her eyes fell and she murmured:

"You know who the woman was."

"Yes," he sighed.

"May I tell you in my own way all that happened?"

"For God's sake, do!"

Then she told him in a woman's way, beginning far back, breaking the course of the story with countless digressions and corrections and repetitions. He was tormented by these tests of his patience, but he was soothed by his inability to find a trace of love for Merithew in anything she said. She defended him from the slanders she had heard; she praised his generosity more than

Worthing enjoyed; she showed a friendship for him and an admiration that Worthing disapproved; but she revealed no hint of amorous interest in him.

She carried the history on to the last afternoon, when she had urged Worthing to call on her that evening. She did not need to tell him that if he had obeyed the behest of his love instead of the demand of his profession, she would not now be in the web of this bloody snare.

She described her careless acceptance of Merithew's invitation to ride in the moonlight. She described the visit to the slums, and her reasons for entering the Orchard Street tenement; how she found herself on the roof and what followed there.

She gave Merithew full credit for the gift of his watch and ring and pearl and money. Then she grew bewildered and entangled in the effort to remember in sequence the gradual modulations from everything gentle and tender to everything frightful and irrevocable.

"I can't understand him or myself," she went on. "All I know is that when he said that my hat hid my eyes from him and wanted to lift it off, I wasn't angry as I ought to have been. I was a little flattered, I suppose, and I—I didn't want to be suspicious or harsh, or— Oh, I don't know. He was terribly gentle, and I didn't resist him. And then I was—well, dazed. I couldn't quite believe that he was making love to me, and yet it seemed so.

"I nearly stepped off the box, and he caught me, and I thanked him, and he didn't let me go at once, and I was going to step down, because his arms were still around me.

"And then—then he closed his arms so tight I couldn't breathe, and caressed my hair, and I couldn't believe what was happening till I felt his lips on mine. Then at last I was mad—fighting mad. I tried to protest, but his lips smothered me and his fingers were tearing at my hair. I grew fearfully angry and I began to beat him with my fists. His head fell back, but he clung to my hair and I struck and pushed and fell, and he struck the chimney

and dragged me after him, and there was an awful clatter, and the next thing I knew I was on my hands and knees and trying to tear myself free. He didn't move or speak or groan even. And his hands grew cold while I tried to open his fingers. And I couldn't get free till I cut my hair with his knife. If only I had died instead of him!"

She was crying again. Her poor eyes seemed still to find tears. But Worthing was magically elated with the fierce infernal joy that is exalted upon horror.

The wretch who had tried to despoil this girl's innocence was struck down. She had fought and hated him, but she had not killed him. He had died of his own sacrilege, sent reeling to earth as one who had touched the Ark of the Covenant.

Worthing did not credit him with any of the self-resistance that had broken his brain as with two twisting hands. Worthing saw only the infamous desire that burned itself out in the excess of its own flame. That was enough for him. He was not Merithew's judge; he was an attorney fighting justice for mercy's sake. If he felt any regret it was that Muriel had not dealt Merithew the fatal blow, instead of accidentally throwing him against a chimney. But he could see that the news he brought her had filled her with divine comfort.

He caught her in his arms ruthlessly. She belonged to him now. He had rescued her. He was very proud of himself.

She stared at him. "You don't despise me? You don't abhor me?" she whimpered.

"I adore you!" he groaned. "You poor little blind, lost, lonesome, poverty-stricken waif of the world!"

It was just the sort of thing she longed for more than anything else on earth.

As is usual with lovers, they thought that all the problems of life had been solved.

They sat there thinking so, so blindly that they did

not heed Kane, who appeared at the door, stared, gaped, and vanished. They did not see that Happy Hanigan had wakened, wondered where he was, slowly remembered, peered over the ledge of the divan, stared at the incredible couple, decided he was dreaming, and fallen asleep again with a little moan of luxury.

It was that that changed the turtle-doves back to human beings in a troubleful world.

Muriel broke from Worthing's clasp and ran to Happy, saw how he snuggled in the velvet and silken cushions, heard a clock tinkle midnight, and said:

"It's too late to take him home. He shall sleep here. Unless his mother will worry."

"She doesn't expect him. I told her I'd keep him under my care for a few days. I don't want him to go back to Batavia Street."

"He sha'n't go back! He shall never go back there to live and sell papers. He shall be like my little brother, for if it hadn't been for him I should never have met you."

At last her good deed had shown some good result.

She pressed a button in the wall, and when sleepy-eyed Kane appeared, she said:

"Master Hanigan is spending the night here. Put him in the red room. He likes red, I imagine."

Kane bowed, picked up the drowsily protesting boy, and toted him up-stairs, took off his shoes, valeted him out of his clothes and into a pair of pajamas big enough for three of him. And Happy slept in a bed where an earl, two princesses, and any number of aristocrats had slept—successively.

When they were alone again, Worthing and Muriel sat in the wordless communion of two long-wedded souls. They had enough to meditate upon. By and by Muriel began to talk again, to muse aloud over the paradox that she had fallen into the pit of evil while on a mission of good. And this reminded her of how Merithew had

ridiculed her ambitions to relieve human misery. She told Worthing what he had said, and she asked him timidly if he, too, believed in the vanity of charity.

"No, no!" Worthing answered, with unusual fervor for him. "That's the old lie: because you can't save all, save none; because you can't succeed perfectly, don't try. But half a loaf is mighty good bread. Look at us doctors. In spite of all we can do, people get sick and die. But we go on groping, and we do get somewhere. We don't have the plagues we once had. We don't have the pain we once had. More people live and live longer and live better.

"It's the same way with human welfare. We don't have the slavery we once had. We don't have the poverty and the starvation that used to be expected to carry off droves every winter. We don't have the cruel punishment of the debtors and the insane and the criminals. Nearly everybody can read and write. The children are protected, and the women are not treated like children. The world has grown better and better. It will never be altogether well with the world, but we can make it better, and we must.

"Life seems to me to be a kind of stairway—a Jacob's Ladder lost in the clouds. We're all cripples more or less, but we've got to climb as far as we can. If we slip back, we must start up again. And we ought to keep at it, laughing, like Happy Hanigan. Look what you've done for him! and for the Angelillo family, and the Balinskys. Think how many more there are in need of you. They're waiting for you now, everywhere, crowds of them, with their hands out to you. They need your sweetness and your beauty and your quick, foolish tears.

"Oh, there's work enough for you, Muriel. And you mustn't let anything prevent you from doing it the best you can. You're tired and afraid and bewildered now. You're like a hard-working laboring-woman who has come home at night bruised and fagged and discouraged. But there's always to-morrow, and your job will be waiting for you in the morning; and you'll find your strength waiting

for you, too. You've had a hard day of it, but you've done no wrong. The only crime you could commit would be to let your own misfortunes blind you to other people's."

He filled her heart with new blood, her soul with the redeeming religion of human service. She felt a strange new need of him and a gratitude that was like an idolatry. She felt that he would protect her from all the perils of the world. And so great was her contentment that she grew profoundly drowsed with that perfect slumber which steals upon a soul at prayer.

Muriel yawned in Worthing's face. But it was a gorgeous yawn.

Worthing took it for the high compliment that it was, and smiled and said: "You are sound asleep already. Go to bed and forget everything till to-morrow. May I come back to see you to-morrow afternoon?"

"To-morrow morning, please!" she pleaded. She took him in her arms and said, "I love you," and kissed him. He did not fail to repay her in kind with usury. His strong arms were like a landlocked harbor where at last her storm-worn soul could drop anchor and lower sail. He loved her well enough to bid her good night and go. She watched him to the door and wafted him another kiss, and then climbed sleepily the long white stairway.

She sent the drowsy maid away and went to her window and leaned out to wave good night again to the young man on the lonely Avenue.

He had not stepped into any limousine or ridden off on a charger. He was staring back at the palace in amazement, wondering by what bewitching miracle he had captured the heart of the princess there. He waved to her till a policeman came by and restored the ballade to prose.

Then he walked rapidly toward the boarding-house where he occupied one very modest single room. His income was hardly greater than Happy Hanigan's, and he was betrothed to a princess. And she was yet to be saved from the mobs of publicity and police.

CHAPTER LXX

THE next morning brought back the old ugly facts and new ugly facts. Perry Merithew's serial epitaph was still writ large in the head-lines.

The police had captured two fugitives, both of them suspect. Aphra Shaler had been apprehended in the mid-West, and Mrs. "Red Ida" Ganley in darkest New Jersey.

When Worthing reached Muriel's home he found her in a distressful mood. He could not comfort her.

The bliss of being saved from believing herself guilty of Merithew's death was all but forgotten in these new situations that put her conscience on the rack.

"What am I to do now?" she wailed. "Those two poor women are disgraced and arrested. Suppose the coroner refuses to accept your expert's theory of apoplexy or holds them both under charges of robbery?"

"They both belong in jail, anyway," Worthing growled.

"But not for this thing. It seems more brutal to punish criminals unjustly than anybody else. What am I to do?"

"Don't worry about them. They'll have alibis galore."

"But they may not be believed. I ought to do something. But what?"

Worthing knit his brows awhile before he spoke. "Of course the one right thing to do is the thing nobody does: tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and trust the people. The people mean well; they are merciful when they are not fooled with. That's why a jury trial gives the defendant the most hope. People understand

people, and the majority has a big, tender heart, when it is given the chance to show it.

"If you came out and told just what happened, what could they do? What would they do? They'd say, 'The poor girl has suffered enough already.' You would be freed by any jury."

The sermon did not convert Muriel in any respect. She said: "I might be freed by a jury after a horrible, unspeakable trial, but I shouldn't be freed by the newspapers. My name would be printed in big letters all over the world. And everybody would sneer at me. I'd be branded for life. Mrs. Merithew would hound me out of the country. If I had children ever, my name would shame them. Nobody would marry me, anyway."

"I'd marry you, anyway."

"Oh, you! You're merely taking pity on me. But I've got to take pity on my poor father and mother. All their money wouldn't buy off one head-line. All their money wouldn't save my name. It's the newspapers, the newspapers that make life a curse to-day. You may advise me to trust the people. But you can't advise me to trust the papers, can you—can you?"

"No, I can't," he sighed. The problem was beyond him. Even his moonflower of romance had withered before the morning sun. The thought of marrying this daughter of plutocracy had grown ridiculous under the full light. He could hardly support himself. How could he support a creature of such royal necessities as she?

He tried to plan some discreet way for intervening in behalf of Aphra Shaler and Red Ida, but every scheme imperiled the concealment of Muriel's name. When his own wits proved unequal to the task, he suggested that Muriel might tell her father and enlist his masterful intellect and his army of lawyers, diplomats, and financiers.

But she revolted at the thought. She had told her story to Maryla and to Worthing. The secret had been relieved. There was no comfort in repetition. The

thought of telling her father was nausea. She frantically refused. She and Worthing spent the day and the evening in discussing and discarding other plans.

Their pathway was through a plague of locusts. Every step stirred up a cloud of them.

Even Happy Hanigan was something of a grasshopper in his restless curiosity. Muriel sent him out at last for a motor-ride—a long one. She told the chauffeur, Parny, to take him down to Batavia Street and get his mother and spin them both to Coney Island. She told Happy to break the news to his mother as gently as he could that he was not to go back to selling newspapers in the street, but he was to be sent to a private school in the country, and his father and mother were to have work and a home on the Schuyler country place.

When Happy was gone Muriel and Worthing attempted to resume their own mutual courtship, but they were too harrowed and too mutually harrowing to recapture that first careless rapture.

The next afternoon's *Gazette* announced another scoop. Perry Merithew's quondam friend, the girl to whom he gave the amethyst-headed hat-pin, Maryla Sokalska, had been run down by the *Gazette* reporter, and was now behind the bars.

In a parallel column, with lesser head-lines, was the first statement of the new theory that Perry Merithew had died of a cerebral hemorrhage. The *Gazette* railed at the far-fetched ruse, and reviled the police, quoting an imaginary man of prominence (who was really Hallard interviewing himself):

"Expert testimony has become a byword of contradictory merchandise; it is now the desperate resort of the incompetent boneheads disguised as detectives and going to a costume party in the fancy dress of policemen. What if Merithew did die of apoplexy before he was killed with a blow? That doesn't make the mystery any less.

Her knees weakened and she sat d

the step and put out her arms.

It makes it greater. What brought on the apoplexy? Who was the woman? Why don't the police produce her and ask her why she cracked his skull when he was already dead? And how did she do it when he had her by the hair? How long did he live after she hit him? Why didn't she send some one to his aid? Did he have hold of her hair before she struck him? Or did she think he was dead and bend over to rob him? And then did he grab her by the hair and hold on to her? How did she cut herself loose and where did she go? Why was it nobody saw her? Did she spend the night in the tenement? Or did she make a get-away through the crowded streets? The story of apoplexy only makes it more of a mystery. The police are hired to solve mysteries, not to pile them up. If it were not for the newspapers the public would have no protection at all. The *Gazette's* activity has been the one bright spot in this dark chapter. It has not only made its rivals look cheap, but has made a shake-up in the police department inevitable."

Muriel read this tirade with a new dismay. "That's what is waiting for me," she said to the distracted Worthing. "That's the mercy I would get from the newspapers. You ask me to trust the people. Well, they are the people. Listen to the wolves barking and howling and tearing one another to pieces! The newspapers and the police are fighting each other, but once they found me, how they would thirst for my blood!"

Then her anger rose. "Where's the justice or the mercy of it? I meant no harm. I went into that place to bring a girl back into her home, and now the girl herself is arrested for murder of a man. She's a widow before she is a wife, and she has an orphan child, and she's in jail. And the papers aren't satisfied with that. They won't let poor Mr. Merithew rest in his grave. They won't let him die. They've got to have him killed, so that they can kill some woman. It's human sacrifice they're after still.

"I'm not going to let them get me there. I'll kill myself first. I'll leave a note confessing what I have to confess, so that poor Maryla won't have to suffer any more. Then I'll get rid of myself. And if you love me you'll make it easy for me. You must know some painless way that won't disfigure me. If you love me you'll help me to escape from this hateful world."

It was not easy for Worthing to bear the sight of her in such tortures; it was not easy for him to coax her back to bravery and wisdom.

The most he could do was to persuade her to defer her self-immolation until he had seen Maryla.

He went to the Tombs and got himself admitted to Maryla's cell on the pretext of being her physician. He had to wait his turn, for she was holding a reception. Her father and mother and her sister and the boarder Pasinsky and her friends the Balinskys were there; also a little East Side lawyer looking for advertisement and a chance to air his eloquence and his wiles.

When Worthing reached Maryla at last he whispered to her to calm her that he came from Muriel, who was determined to save her from danger at any cost, even at the cost of proclaiming herself.

This threw Maryla into a panic, and she implored Worthing to compel Muriel to silence. She explained her own plan, her little rabbit device for fooling the hounds. She took great pride in it.

She took great pride also in announcing that her father had recalled her from the death he had assigned her to, and had taken her into his arms, and had wept till her baby grabbed him by the beard like what Maryla done when she was a baby. And then he laughed so loud like she had never hoid him, and he kissed that baby and said she was his grandbaby already.

And Pasinsky had begged her to marry him, and maybe she might yet when she got out once. Anyway, she

gave him a promise on it so he should stop all the time crying.

And all these honors she had received without confessing that she was innocent of Merithew's death.

Before Worthing left her she had another caller, a lawyer who showed her a cablegram from Paris; it was from Dutilh, who was trying to rescue from the stampede of war's alarms the best models of the fashion-creators before the hasty mobilizations threw them into the uniform of soldiers and marched them off to the frontiers of embattled France.

The cable letter read:

Paris herald says my model maryla arrested merithew case for god's sake get her out give her my love. DUTILH.

Worthing breathed freelier and put the whole case in the hands of this lawyer. To him he could mention the name of Miss Schuyler in confidence as a friend of Maryla's who felt responsible for her safety, since she had brought her to Dutilh's notice and unwittingly to Merithew's.

Maryla told Dutilh's lawyer to go away and stay away until he was sent for. She intended to keep the police engaged till the last moment. But her true picture was published in the papers, and the venerable Sister Superior saw it and hastened to her in her cell, and identified her and her child, and proved that she had spent that fatal night, and the other nights till her arrest, in the ward among the other mothers with their babies at breast.

Nobody questioned such testimony, and Maryla was driven out of jail. In due time she married Henryk Pasinsky, and they started life on a mysterious dowry of remarkable magnificence.

When little "Red Ida" Ganley was starved out and nabbed by a detective, she faced the police as a game little cat faces a pack of bulldogs. They have her at their mercy, but they are sure to get their noses scratched

"Well, boys, go to it," she said. "You're goin' to gimme the thoid degree, I suppose. Gimme a cig'ret foist, will you? 'At's the boy. Now begin to commence. What am I wanted for?"

"The murder of Perry Merithew."

"Oh, rully? Great! You never railroaded me for no swell crime before. Sorry, boys, but I never sor that gempmun."

"Ah, none of that, Ida," one of the plain-clothes men broke in. "I seen you myself dancin' with him."

"Oh, hello, Cutie! Did you? Is that so? Well, a lady like me who's a dancer by perfession has gotta dance with all kinds of guys. It's gettin' to be too promiscurous for me."

They laughed at her lovingly, but they shook their heads.

"I guess you and that coke-consumin' partner of yours have gotta stand trile," the chief inquisitor said. "It happened right in your little districk, too."

Ida gave her alibi blushingly: on the night of Merithew's death she had been arrested for picking a pocket in Yonkers during the evening crush in Getty Square. She had gone there to dance, and lost her way. She had inquired it of a kind old gent with a watch-chain big enough for a watch-dog. She just had to take a swipe at it. He had caught her in the act and called a policeman. She had been locked up for the night, and released the next day because the nice old gent had believed her promises of reform and refused to appear against her. She admitted with deep humiliation that she had not been reco'nized by the copper or by the beak on the bench.

"I tell you nobody's famous far from home."

"But why did you beat it and hide in New Jersey?"

"I was ashamed to be caught in Yonkers. The papers said you was after me for this job. And I didn't want to have to use no bum alibi like Yonkers for fear you'd gimme the laugh. I guess I'd rather you sprung me now than put it in the paper like I told you."

They telephoned the Yonkers headquarters and learned that an innocent-looking frail little red-headed girl had indeed been arrested for lifting a watch, and had been released, since it was her first offense.

So they laughed Red Ida out of jeopardy.

Aphra Shaler had hidden herself in a smallish city in the Middle West, but her air of helplessness had attracted the benevolence of two or three kind old gentlemen, and they had fallen by the ears like jealous Samaritans. The local police force had cast its eye on Aphra and recognized her likeness to the face on the placards sent out by the New York police with the words "Wanted" and "Reward" in large black type. They notified the New York police. A detective was sent out to bring her in.

He nearly lost Aphra *en route*, for in the drawing-room of the sleeper she fascinated him with that superhuman naïveté which had fooled even Perry Merithew.

She told how the handsome devil had lured her from her home in the most innocent and sweetest of villages; how he had promised her marriage, and she had learned too late that he was wed to Another; of how he had blinded her with promises to marry her as soon as he could unmarry himself from the cold and indiffer'nt sussiety woman he was bound to.

"And so he kept me a prisoner. And then he threw me overboard for somebody else when I was no longer of use to him. And as if he hadn't done enough to ruin my life, he goes and gets himself killed in the slums where, Heaven knows, anybody who knew me could have told the police I would never have went—gone!

"And all I have to show for my ruined life is a few old-fashioned clothes and a jewel or two. I wonder did he leave me anything in his will? Oh, I tell you, John" —by this time she was calling the detective by his individual as well as generic name of John—"oh, I tell you, John, it's a cruel world, and it's always the woman gets it. The woman pays and pays," etc.

If the journey had been an hour longer the detective would probably have offered to marry her himself and take flight with her to some country where innocence was respected. But New York was reached in time.

Aphra submitted a perfect alibi, although a somewhat painful one to the fat gentleman whom she had abandoned on the beach for Merry Perry. She had regained him that evening in time to provide her with the dinner the handsome devil of a Merithew had refused her.

Her affidavit and his released her, but they afterward served his wife as perfect evidence in a divorce suit. And now Aphra had matriculated in the co-respondent's school and her future was full of assurance.

Almost her first visitor after her release was the reporter Hallard. Almost her first question was, "Did you look up that Schuyler girl, like I told you to?"

Hallard rewarded her with a harsh rebuke, but when he left her he began to wonder how he could get near that closely guarded, unapproachable, irreproachable princess. He hated himself for giving a thought to such suspicion, but who else was left to suspect? And what an epochal sensation it would be if the *Gazette* could capture such a prize!

He resolved to set out on the secret hunt the next morning.

CHAPTER LXXI

THE next morning the war broke forth in Europe and all the world quaked with conflict.

The cataclysm that threw civilization into chaos diverted attention from one anxious girl, and drove the name of Perry Merithew from the front page, or any page. Even the police had other problems tumbled upon them in such masses that they put aside the case.

When millions were marching against millions to be shot, mangled, starved, what did it matter that a certain man had been found on a roof with the hair of an uncertain woman in his hands? The red hands of war had civilization by the hair.

America, just emerging from prolonged hard times, found itself thrown back into financial confusion, yet with all the world turning toward it as the altar of peace and plenty. Thousands of Americans abroad were crying, "Send us ships and money and food and get us home!" Myriads of foreigners gathering in New York were clamoring to get back to their fatherlands, reservists of the various nations threatening to start little wars of their own, but in still graver danger of starving.

From Belgium, Poland, and all the nations the cries came jangling, "Send us food; send us clothes, medicines, money, guns, powder, motors, horses, nurses, doctors."

Everything merely national, local, individual, lost importance. The children in the streets were talking cosmic gossip. The papers, lacking space for ordinary news, dismissed their mere reporters by the score. Hallard went

overboard with the rest and joined the tremendous army of the unemployed.

As always happens when the basest qualities of man flourished, the purest and the noblest qualities also arose to keep the old-time balance of good and bad.

If there never was so futile, so destructive, so mad a war, neither was there ever so beautiful, so heroic, so enormous a charity. The oceans that saw the dreadnoughts, and the airships, and the submarines, saw also the fleets of pity, the swan-ships carrying the grails of rescue.

And now Muriel Schuyler saw her opportunity. She could not rest content with subscribing money and working up festivals, and knitting mufflers, and feeding hungry reservists stranded in town. She would take a ship across to the aid of the women of Europe.

When she told Worthing he worshiped her for the inspiration and for the power. He ventured to protest:

"You can't go as a nurse unless I go as a surgeon."

"That was my idea," she said. "You shall be the chief surgeon of my crew of surgeons, and you shall be paid at last as you deserve."

"Who's going to pay me?" he asked, a bit dubiously.

"My father," she said, without a doubt.

"Glorious! When did you tell him?"

"To-morrow morning."

What Muriel might have done if she had been free of mind and heart, she was the more impelled to do now that her prayer was for an escape from the peril of detection and the torment of inaction.

She went to her father and said, "Buy me a ship and fit it out so that I can fill it with nurses and doctors and hurry over to Europe and help those poor soldiers!"

Jacob stared at her as if she were demented. "Why on earth should you risk your health and your life on such a mad crusade? Stay home where you are safe."

"But I am not safe at home. I am afraid, and in great danger."

"Nonsense!"

And then she told him. It was black news to him and it almost crushed him. But after the long torture of learning the truth he had the solace of believing his girl-child innocent of guile; he had the comfort of saying that he had warned her against Merithew; he had the monopolist's privilege of making her promise not to tell her mother.

Partly from eagerness to have her out of the reach of any accidental stroke of detective luck, and more because of the precious opportunity that gladdened her, he granted her her ship.

It was the most expensive toy he had ever bought her. He told her it would have to be her Christmas present and her birthday present both. He made himself responsible for the salaries of the physicians and the nurses and the crew, and for the coal and provisions, and the bandages and instruments and all.

He had assumed the burden of telling her mother of the scheme, and of bearing the brunt of Susan's indignation. Susan poured out the phials and the magnums of her wrath on Jacob, and when Muriel appeared, demurely, Susan had nothing left to say except a feeble:

"You couldn't possibly go without a chaperon."

"Why not?"

"You're not married."

"If I were married, it would be all right?"

"It would be at least correct."

"I see."

She sauntered away and telephoned to Dr. Worthing and explained her mother's old-fashioned scruples. She had called him from a complication of tasks and his mind was not clear. He did not take the hint at all. Muriel repeated the message:

"My mother says if I were married it would be all right."

"Yes, so you said. That makes it rather awkward, doesn't it?"

"Does it? I thought it made it rather simple."

"How do you mean?"

"You've been helping yourself to my young affections so freely recently that I had an idea you were planning to marry me yourself. But, of course, if you were merely philandering, good-by!"

"Oh, good Lord, wait: Muriel, honey, darling, name the day, the hour, the minute!"

"Is this afternoon at three too soon?"

"How can I wait so long?"

"Can I trust you to get the license and the ring? If I provide a parson?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Then the wedding will be at our home at three. Remember. Better write down the name and the address."

"I'll be there, God bless you!"

"Thanks ever so much. Good-by."

He borrowed some money of Dr. Eccleston to pay for the license, the ring, and the necessary taxicabs. He promised to remit the loan out of his first pay as chief surgeon of the expedition. He reached the house with the document and the implement and a heart all ready for the sacrament.

He had forgotten to robe himself as a bridgroom and to provide a better man, so Muriel drafted Winnie Nicolls, who happened to be calling. He found it a most distasteful service, but he bore it like a true sportsman.

The bride was all in white. It pleased her to wear her new uniform. The only color was the red cross on the sleeve.

CHAPTER LXXII

WHEN the ship was ready to go it was visited by a platoon of reporters and photographers and moving-picture men. Among them was Hallard, who had been granted the assignment as a special commission to help out his poverty.

Muriel underwent the ordeal of the syndicated interview with unaffected meekness and pride, and to the great satisfaction of Hallard.

She was one of the few women of the wealthy (or of any) group that Hallard did not despise. He had already decided upon two or three fervent epithets in her praise as his little farewell garland. He was afraid that he might forget them, but he did not want to be caught taking notes. He found a deserted passageway between two deck cabins and began to make a few memoranda surreptitiously.

Muriel and Worthing, released from the interview, were pacing up and down the deck of their private ship like Columbus and Isabella. A gust of wind snatched off Muriel's official cap, and she fell back against the cabin and waited, laughing, while Worthing ran for it and chased it down the scuppers.

The brisk air tugged and clutched at her curls till it loosened a long coil of hair unknown to her, and fluttered it against the wall of the cabin.

Hallard stared. He could see no marks of any cutting, but the color of it terrified him. It would be easy to take out his knife and draw the blade across a bit of it for further study. It would be safer still to place alongside

it the little strand he carried in his pocketbook, the little strand he had stolen from Perry Merithew's fingers.

He caught out his pocketbook and lifted the copper threads from the envelope.

And then he paused. What if it should prove true that she was the one? What good could it do him, or Merithew, or the world to be assured of this? What endless wretchedness it would involve! What beautiful deeds it would frustrate!

He was afraid.

He stared at the fatal silken fibers a long moment. Then he opened his hand and let the wind take them.

Dr. Worthing came back, laughing, with the nurse's cap, and Muriel, laughing, gathered her hair together and fastened it under the little white helmet of mercy.

Hallard slunk away in a mood of craven shame; he had been guilty of treachery to his paper; he had been false to the sacred priestcraft of publishing the secrets of the few for the entertainment of the many. Dejected and miserable, he trudged across the gang-plank, wondering.

And the ship went down the river and across the bay and out into the sea, with the band playing.

On an evening when the voyage was about half over, the moon being under a cloud, Muriel came out of her cabin alone. She carried under her cloak an old doll. She opened a seam in the skirt of it with the scissors hanging at her belt, and she took from the rags inside a watch, and a pearl pin, and a diamond ring. These she dropped into the ocean and thought a little prayer over them, and sighed, "Poor Perry Merithew!"

She took the doll back to the cabin, and had just finished sewing up the seam again when her husband came in and said, as he kissed her—not having seen her for almost half an hour:

"What's all that?"

"Just an old doll of mine, honey." She had meant to spare him this final knowledge. But it was more comfortable to keep secrets with him than from him, and she told him everything.

"Why didn't you drop the old doll overboard, too?" he asked; and fearing that it would be only a harrowing reminder of experiences better forgot, he put out his hand and said, "Let me."

But she shrank away, fondling the doll with a mystic child-mother look he had never seen in her eyes.

"Old Suki's been too faithful to be cast away. Besides, I was thinking what a treasure she would be to some poor little doll-less Belgian kid," she said.

And he said, "You're always thinking of children."

THE END

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

Ask your dealer for a complete list of
A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction

Abner Daniel.....*Will N. Harben*
Adventures of Gerard.....*A. Conan Doyle*
Adventures of a Modest Man.....*R. W. Chambers*
Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.....*A. Conan Doyle*
After House, The.....*Mary Roberts Rinehart*
Ailsa Paige.....*Robert W. Chambers*
Alternative, The.....*George Barr McCutcheon*
Alton of Somasco.....*Harold Bindloss*
Amateur Gentleman, The.....*Jeffery Farnol*
Andrew The Glad.....*Maria Thompson Daviess*
Ann Boyd.....*Will N. Harben*
Annals of Ann, The.....*Kate T. Sharber*
Anna the Adventuress.....*E. Phillips Oppenheim*
Armchair at the Inn, The.....*F. Hopkinson Smith*
Ariadne of Allan Water.....*Sidney McCall*
At the Age of Eve.....*Kate T. Sharber*
At the Mercy of Tiberius.....*Augusta Evans Wilson*
Auction Block, The.....*Rex Beach*
Aunt Jane of Kentucky.....*Eliza C. Hall*
Awakening of Helena Ritchie.....*Margaret Deland*
Bambi.....*Marjorie Benton Cooke*
Bandbox, The.....*Louis Joseph Vance*
Barbara of the Snows.....*Harry Irving Green*
Bar 20.....*Clarence E. Mulford*
Bar 20 Days.....*Clarence E. Mulford*
Barrier, The.....*Rex Beach*
Beasts of Tarzan, The.....*Edgar Rice Burroughs*
Beechy.....*Bettina Von Hutten*
Bella Donna.....*Robert Hichens*
Beloved Vagabond, The.....*Wm. J. Locke*
Ben Blair.....*Will Lillibridge*
Beth Norvell.....*Randall Parrish*
Betrayal, The.....*E. Phillips Oppenheim*
Better Man, The.....*Cyrus Townsend Brady*
Beulah (Ill. Ed).....*Augusta J. Evans*
Black Is White.....*George Barr McCutcheon*
Blaze Derringer.....*Eugene P. Lyle, Jr.*
Bob Hampton of Placer.....*Randall Parrish*
Bob, Son of Battle.....*Alfred Ollivant*
Brass Bowl, The.....*Louis Joseph Vance*

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

Ask your dealer for a complete list of
A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction

Britton of the Seventh.....*Cyrus Townsend Brady*
Broad Highway, The.....*Jeffery Farnol*
Bronze Bell, The.....*Louis Joseph Vance*
Buck Peters, Ranchman.....*Clarence E. Mulford*
Business of Life, The.....*Robert W. Chambers*
Butterfly Man, The.....*George Barr McCutcheon*
By Right of Purchase.....*Harold Bindloss*
Cabbages and Kings.....*O. Henry*
Cab No. 44.....*R. F. Foster*
Calling of Dan Matthews, The.....*Harold Bell Wright*
Cape Cod Stories.....*Joseph C Lincolr*
Cap'n Eri.....*Joseph C. Lincoln*
Cap'n Warren's Wards.....*Joseph C. Lincoln*
Caravaners..*Author of Elizabeth and Her German Garden*
Cardigan.....*Robert W. Chambers*
Carmen.....(*Geraldine Farrar Edition*)
Carpet From Bagdad, The.....*Harold MacGrath*
Cash Intrigue, The.....*George Randolph Chester*
Castle by the Sea, The.....*H. B. M. Watson*
Claw, The.....*Cynthia Stockley*
C. O. D.....*Natalie Sumner Lincoln*
Colonial Free Lance, A.....*Chauncey O. Hotchkiss*
Coming of the Law, The.....*Chas. A. Seltzer*
Conquest of Canaan, The.....*Booth Tarkington*
Conspirators, The.....*Robert W. Chambers*
Counsel for the Defense.....*Leroy Scott*
Crime Doctor, The.....*E. W. Hornung*
Cry in the Wilderness, A.....*Mary E. Waller*
Cynthia of the Minute.....*Louis Joseph Vance*
Dark Hollow, The.....*Anna Katharine Green*
Dave's Daughter.....*Patience Bevier Cole*
Day of Days, The.....*Louis Joseph Vance*
Day of the Dog, The.....*George Barr McCutcheon*
Depot Master, The.....*Joseph C. Lincoln*
Desired Woman, The.....*Will N. Harben*
Destroying Angel, The.....*Louis Joseph Vance*
Diamond Master, The.....*Jacques Futrelle*
Dixie Hart.....*Will N. Harben*
El Dorado.....*Baroness Orczy*
Elusive Lsabel.....*Jacques Futrelle*

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

Ask your dealer for a complete list of
A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction

Empty Pockets.....*Rupert Hughes*
Enchanted Hat, The.....*Harold MacGrath*
Eye of Dread, The.....*Payne Erskine*
Eyes of the World, The.....*Harold Bell Wright*
Far Horizon, The.....*Lucas Malet*
54-40 or Fight.....*Emerson Hough*
Fighting Chance, The.....*Robert W. Chambers*
Financier, The.....*Theodore Dreiser*
Flamsted Quarries.....*Mary E. Waller*
Flying Mercury, The.....*Eleanor M. Ingram*
For a Maiden Brave.....*Chauncey C. Hotchkiss*
Four Million, The.....*O. Henry*
Four Pool's Mystery, The.....*Jean Webster*
Fruitful Vine, The.....*Robert Hichens*
Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford.....*G. R. Chester*
Gilbert Neal.....*Will N. Harben*
Girl From His Town, The.....*Marie Van Vorst*
Girl of the Blue Ridge, A.....*Payne Erskine*
Girl Who Lived in the Woods, The.....*M. B. Cooke*
Girl Who Won, The.....*Beth Ellis*
Glory of Clementina, The.....*Wm. J. Locke*
Glory of the Conquered, The.....*Susan Glaspell*
God's Country and the Woman.....*J. O. Curwood*
God's Good Man.....*Marie Corelli*
Going Some.....*Rex Beach*
Gold Bag, The.....*Carolyn Wells*
Golden Web, The.....*Anthony Partridge*
Gordon Craig.....*Randall Parrish*
Greyfriars Bobby.....*Eleanor Atkinson*
Guests of Hercules.....*C. N. and A. M. Williamson*
Halcyone.....*Elinor Glyn*
Happy Island (Sequel to Uncle William).....*J. Lee*
Havoc.....*E. Phillips Oppenheim*
Heart of the Desert, The.....*Honore Willsie*
Heart of the Hills, The.....*John Fox, Jr*
Heart of Philura.....*Florence Morse Kingsley*
Heather-Moon, The.....*C. N. and A. M. Williamson*
Her Infinite Variety.....*Brand Whitlock*
Her Weight in Gold.....*George Barr McCutcheon*
Herb of Grace.....*Rosa Nouchette Carey*

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

Ask your dealer for a complete list of
A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction

Hidden Children, The.....*Robert W. Chambers*
Highway of Fate, The.....*Rosa N. Carey*
Homesteaders, The.....*Kate and Virgil D. Boyles*
Hoosier Volunteer, The.....*Kate and Virgil D. Boyles*
Hopalong Cassidy.....*Clarence E. Mulford*
House of Happiness, The.....*Kate Langley Bosher*
House of the Whispering Pines.....*A. K. Green*
Hugh Wynne, Free Quaker.....*S. W. Mitchell, M.D.*
Husbands of Edith, The.....*George Barr McCutcheon*
Illustrious Prince, The.....*E Phillips Oppenheim*
Imposter, The.....*John Reed Scott*
In Defiance of the King.....*Chauncey C. Hotchkiss*
Indifference of Juliet, The.....*Grace S. Richmond*
Inez (Ill. Ed.).....*Augusta J. Evans*
Infelice.....*Augusta Evans Wilson*
Initials Only.....*Anna Katharine Green*
Innocent.....*Marie Corelli*
Intriguers, The.....*Harold Bindloss*
Iron Trail, The.....*Rex Beach*
Iron Woman, The.....*Margaret Deland*
Ishmael (Ill.).....*Mrs. Southworth*
Island of Regeneration, The.....*Cyrus Townsend Brady*
Island of the Stairs, The.....*Cyrus Townsend Brady*
Japonette.....*Robert W. Chambers*
Jane Cable.....*George Barr McCutcheon*
Jeanne of the Marshes.....*E. Phillips Oppenheim*
Jennie Gerhardt.....*Theodore Dreiser*
Joyful Heatherby.....*Payne Erskine*
Jude the Obscure.....*Thomas Hardy*
Judgment House, The.....*Gilbert Parker*
Keith of the Border.....*Randall Parrish*
Kent Knowles: "Quahaug".....*Joseph C. Lincoln*
Kingsmead.....*Bettina Von Hutten*
Knave of Diamonds, The.....*Ethel M. Dell*
Ladder of Swords, A.....*Gilbert Parker*
Lady and the Pirate, The.....*Emerson Hough*
Lady Betty Across the Water *C. N. and A. M. Williamson*
Lady Merton, Colonist.....*Mrs. Humphry Ward*
Land of Long Ago, The.....*Eliza Calvert Hall*
Last Shot, The.....*Frederick N. Palmer*

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

Ask your dealer for a complete list of
A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction

Last Trail, The (new edition).....*Zane Grey*
Last Voyage of the Donna Isabel.....*Randall Parrish*
Laughing Cavalier, The.....*Baroness Orczy*
Life Mask, The.....*Author of "To M. L. G."*
Lighted Way, The.....*E. Phillips Oppenheim*
Lin McLean.....*Owen Wister*
Little Brown Jug at Kildare.....*Meredith Nicholson*
Lone Wolf, The.....*Louis Joseph Vance*
Lonesome Land.....*B M. Bower*
Lord Loveland Discovers America.
C. N. and A. M. Williamson
Lorraine.....*Robert W. Chambers*
Lost Ambassador.....*E. Phillips Oppenheim*
Lost Road, The.....*Richard Harding Davis*
Lost World, The.....*A. Conan Doyle*
Loves of Lady Arabella.....*Mollie Elliott Seawell*
Loves of Miss Anne, The.....*S. R. Crockett*
Love Under Fire.....*Randall Parrish*
Macarla (Ill. Ed.).....*Augusta J. Evans*
Mademoiselle Celeste.....*Adele F. Knight*
Maids of Paradise, The.....*Robert W. Chambers*
Maid of the Forest, The.....*Randall Parrish*
Maid of the Whispering Hills.....*Vingie E. Roe*
Mam' Linda.....*Will N. Harben*
Man Outside, The.....*Wyndham Martyn*
Marriage.....*H. G. Wells*
Marriage a la Mode.....*Mrs. Humphry Ward*
Marriage of Theodora, The.....*Mollie Elliott Seawell*
Mary Moreland.....*Marie Van Vorst*
Master Mummer, The.....*E. Phillips Oppenheim*
Max.....*Katherine Cecil Thurston*
Maxwell Mystery, The.....*Carolyn Wells*
Mediator, The.....*Roy Norton*
Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes.....*A. Conan Doyle*
Mischief Maker, The.....*E. Phillips Oppenheim*
Miss Gibbie Gault.....*Kate Langley Bosher*
Miss Philura's Wedding Gown.....*F. M. Kingsley*
Miss Selina Lue.....*Maria Thompson Daviess*
Molly McDonald.....*Randall Parrish*
Money Moon, The.....*Jeffery Farnol*

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

Ask your dealer for a complete list of
A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction

Motor Maid, The.....*C. N. and A. M. Williamson*
Moth, The.....*William Dana Orcutt*
Mountain Girl, The.....*Payne Erskine*
Mr. Bingle.....*George Barr McCutcheon*
Mr. Grex of Monte Carlo.....*E. Phillips Oppenheim*
Mr. Pratt.....*Joseph C. Lincoln*
Mr. Pratt's Patients.....*Joseph C. Lincoln*
Mrs. Red Pepper.....*Grace S. Richmond*
My Demon Motor Boat.....*George Fitch*
My Friend the Chauffeur....*C. N. and A. M. Williamson*
My Lady Caprice.....*Jeffrey Farnol*
My Lady of Doubt.....*Randall Parrish*
My Lady of the North.....*Randall Parrish*
My Lady of the South.....*Randall Parrish*
Mystery Tales.....*Edgar Allan Poe*
Ne'er-Do-Well, The.....*Rex Beach*
Net, The.....*Rex Beach*
New Clarion, The.....*Will N. Harben*
Night Riders, The.....*Ridgwell Cullum*
Night Watches.....*W. W. Jacobs*
Officer 666.....*B. W. Currie and A. McHugh*
Once Upon a Time.....*Richard Harding Davis*
One Braver Thing.....*Richard Dehan*
One Way Trail, The.....*Ridgwell Cullum*
Otherwise Phyllis.....*Meredith Nicholson*
Out of the Primitive.....*Robert Ames Bennet*
Pair of Silk Stockings.....*Cyril Harcourt*
Palace of Darkened Windows.....*M. H. Bradley*
Pardners.....*Rex Beach*
Parrot & Co.....*Harold MacGrath*
Partners of the Tide.....*Joseph C. Lincoln*
Passionate Friends, The.....*H. G. Wells*
Patience of John Moreland, The.....*Mary Dillon*
Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail.....*Ralph Connor*
Paul Anthony, Christian.....*Hiram W Hayes*
People's Man, A.....*E. Phillips Oppenheim*
Perch of the Devil.....*Gertrude Atherton*
Peter Ruff.....*E. Phillips Oppenheim*
Phillip Steele.....*James Oliver Curwood*
Phra the Phoenician.....*Edwin L. Arnold*

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

Ask your dealer for a complete list of
A. L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction

Pidgin Island.....*Harold MacGrath*
Place of Honeymoons, The.....*Harold MacGrath*
Plunderer, The.....*Roy Norton*
Pole Baker.....*Will N. Harben*
Pool of Flame, The.....*Louis Joseph Vance*
Polly of the Circus.....*Margaret Mayo*
Poppy.....*Cynthia Stockley*
Port of Adventure.....*C. N. and A. M. Williamson*
Postmaster, The.....*Joseph C. Lincoln*
Power and the Glory, The.....*Grace McGowan Cooke*
Price of Love, The.....*Arnold Bennett*
Price of the Prairie, The.....*Margaret Hill McCarter*
Prince of Sinners, A.....*A. Phillips Oppenheim*
Princess Dehra, The.....*John Reed Scott*
Princess Passes, The.....*C. N. and A. M. Williamson*
Princess Virginia, The.....*C. N. and A. M. Williamson*
Prisoners of Chance.....*Randall Parrish*
Purple Parasol, The.....*George Barr McCutcheon*
Ranch at the Wolverine, The.....*B. M. Bower*
Ranching for Sylvia.....*Harold Bindloss*
Reason Why, The.....*Elinor Glyn*
Red Cross Girl, The.....*Richard Harding Davis*
Redemption of Kenneth Galt.....*Will N. Harben*
Red Lane, The.....*Holman Day*
Red Mist, The.....*Randall Parrish*
Red Mouse, The.....*Wm. Hamilton Osborne*
Red Pepper Burns.....*Grace S. Richmond*
Red Republic, The.....*Robert W. Chambers*
Return of Tarzan, The.....*Edgar Rice Burroughs*
Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary, The.....*Anne Warner*
Rim of the Desert, The.....*Ada Woodruff Anderson*
Rise of Roscoe Paine, The.....*Joseph C. Lincoln*
Road to Providence.....*Maria Thompson Daviess*
Robinetta.....*Kate Douglas Wiggin*
Romance of a Plain Man, The.....*Ellen Glasgow*
Rocks of Valpré, The.....*Ethel M. Dell*
Rose in the Ring, The.....*George Barr McCutcheon*
Rose of the World.....*Agnes and Egerton Castle*
Rose of Old Harpeth.....*Maria Thompson Daviess*
Round the Corner in Gay Street.....*G. S. Richmond*

Popular Copyright Novels

AT MODERATE PRICES

Ask your dealer for a complete list of
A L. Burt Company's Popular Copyright Fiction

Routledge Rides Alone.....*Will L. Comfort*
St. Elmo (Ill. Ed.).....*Augusta J. Evans*
Salamander, The.....*Owen Johnson*
Second Violin, The.....*Grace S. Richmond*
Secret of the Reef.....*Harold Bindloss*
Secrets of the German War Office.....*Dr. A. K. Graves*
Seffy.....*John Luther Long*
Self-Raised (Ill.).....*Mrs. Southworth*
Septimus.....*William J. Locke*
Set in Silver.....*C. N. and A. M. Williamson*
Sharrow.....*Bettina Von Hutten*
Shea of the Irish Brigade.....*Randall Parrish*
Shepherd of the Hills, The.....*Harold Bell Wright*
Sheriff of Dyke Hole, The.....*Ridgwell Cullum*
Ship's Company.....*W. W. Jacobs*
Silver Horde, The.....*Rex Beach*
Simon the Jester.....*William J. Locke*
Siren of the Snows, A.....*Stanley Shaw*
Sir Richard Calmady.....*Lucas Malet*
Sixty-First Second, The.....*Owen Johnson*
Speckled Bird, A.....*Augusta Evans Wilson*
Slim Princess, The.....*George Ade*
Spirit in Prison, A.....*Robert Hichens*
Spirit of the Border, The (new edition).....*Zane Grey*
Spoilers, The.....*Rex Beach*
Still Jim.....*Honore Willsie*
Stolen Singer, The.....*Martha Bellinger*
Stooping Lady, The.....*Maurice Hewlitt*
Story of Marco, The.....*Eleanor H. Porter*
Strange Disappearance, A.....*Anna Katharine Green*
Strawberry Acres.....*Grace S. Richmond*
Strawberry Handkerchief, The.....*Amelia E. Barr*
Streets of Ascalon, The.....*Robert W. Chambers*
Sunshine Jane.....*Anne Warner*
Susan Clegg and Her Friend Mrs. Lathrop....*A. Warner*
Sword of the Old Frontier, A.....*Randall Parrish*
Tales of Sherlock Holmes.....*A. Conan Doyle*
Tarzan of the Apes.....*Edgar R. Burroughs*
Taste of Apples, The.....*Jennette Lee*
Tempting of Tavernake, The.....*E. P. Oppenheim*